

# The Activist

Issue 9 - November 2016



GMB News From Around The Region

## GMB's Health & Safety Forum Show Their Support For World Mental Health Day



## WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY



World Mental Health Day was marked on October 10<sup>th</sup> with events across the region to highlight mental health issues and to try and end the social stigma surrounding the condition. Anxiety and depression have been estimated to account for one fifth of days lost from work in Britain and one in six people have had one of the most common mental disorders. 20% of adolescents may experience a mental health problem in any given year while suicide is the leading cause of death for 20-34 year olds.

At a time of crippling cuts to public sector services across the country, mental health care is struggling to cope with the demands placed on its services. Demand for mental health services has risen by 20% over the past five years while budgets have been cut by at least 8% in real terms. With this in mind, noticing signs and symptoms and providing even simple support becomes even more important. The theme of this year's event was psychological first aid; the idea being if you know someone in need, then take five minutes out for a cup of tea and a chat. Little things can make all the difference. If someone is struggling even just showing that you care by simply being there can make a massive difference, to listen and be a friend needs no special training. World Mental Health Day raises awareness (even royalty got involved) but the key is to ensure that mental health doesn't slip off the agenda. GMB has produced a guide called Mental Health in the Workplace; to request a copy ring 0345 337 7777. Our GMB Young Members' Section are continuing their campaign to raise mental health awareness and the Equality Forum will shortly kick-start a campaign encouraging workplaces to look at policies and procedures around mental health.

### In this issue...

World Mental Health Day	page 1
Campaigning Regional Council	page 2
Foster Carers' Campaign	page 3
Sheffield Bin Dispute	page 4
Getting Ready For Universal Credit	page 5
Life-Long Learning	page 6



### GMB takes the campaign to Wakefield Council

Prominent buildings in the region were lit up purple on World Mental Health Day as part of a worldwide initiative to highlight the campaign to raise mental health awareness. Wakefield Council lit up the Town Hall clock while Bradford Council lit up the clock at City Hall. They were part of a diverse collection of buildings nationally to get involved, including the London Eye. Click here to see our video:

<https://youtu.be/mqnHhNDHjCg>

## THE ACTIVIST

GMB - Grove Hall - 60 College Grove Road - Wakefield - WF1 3RN

0345 337 7777 [www.gmb.yorkshire.org.uk](http://www.gmb.yorkshire.org.uk)

# The Activist



**John Dunn (former miner) from the Orgreave Truth And Justice Campaign**

## CAMPAINING REGIONAL COUNCIL

On Saturday, 29th October we had another 'first' for the region by holding an 'open' Regional Council meeting. Regional Council meets twice a year and is the body made up of elected representatives from branches which oversee the business and administration of the region. Delegates to Regional Council make decisions on GMB's organising and campaigning priorities and as such is an important part of GMB's democratic process.

As part of the region's commitment to engage more with representatives, activists and members we decided to open-up the meeting to everyone. The turnout was great and those in attendance heard from a number of guest speakers including, Jack Dromey MP, Shadow Minister for Labour, John Dunn, former miner from the Orgreave Truth And Justice Campaign, Tracy Brabin, newly elected Labour MP for Batley and Spen and Kamaljeet Jandu, GMB Equality Officer who spoke about the Grunwick Dispute on its 40th anniversary.

Neil Derrick, Regional Secretary, said: **"For a first try it went well and we had a good response from activists and the speakers were excellent. There are many good points we can take away for future events. My aim is to make GMB Yorkshire and North Derbyshire the most active campaigning region in the union and involve reps and members in our activities more than ever."**



**Martin Jackson activist from Barnsley Hospital taking part in a Q&A**



**GMB members enjoying the diverse range of speakers at Regional Council**



## TRACY WINS BATLEY & SPEN BY-ELECTION

Congratulations to GMB member Tracy Brabin on her election as the new MP for Batley & Spen following the death of Jo Cox MP. Speaking to *The Activist* Tracy said: **"My victory was a bittersweet occasion for me and the fact that the by-election had to take place at all was a tragedy."** While she paid tribute to Jo during her acceptance speech she was heckled by some of the other fringe candidates, which included the National Front and the BNP who all lost their deposits.



**Tracy being welcomed by Jeremy Corbyn and MPs in London**

## THE ACTIVIST

# The Activist

## LOCAL MP GETS BEHIND GMB'S FOSTER CARERS' CAMPAIGN

Holly Lynch, Labour MP for Calderdale has pledged her support in our campaign to organise foster carers across the region. She took time out of her busy schedule to meet Rachel Harrison, GMB's Organiser for foster carers and Steve Jennings, Political Officer, to discuss the concerns of GMB members who provide foster care in Calderdale.

GMB is now representing hundreds of foster carers in the region and across the country. These are vulnerable workers with no employment rights who need the support of GMB. Some local authorities are attempting to reduce their terms and payments which has a massive impact on their ability to foster. With a shortage crisis in the UK of foster carers, attacking their job security is not what local authorities should be doing when they need to attract more people to this vital role. The GMB is working with Fostering Network nationally to campaign for national standards and improvements.

**Do you or someone you know foster? If so, encourage them to join the GMB today!**



L to R Rachel Harrison, Steve Jennings and Holly Lynch MP



## RESEARCH PRODUCED BY GMB HAS HIGHLIGHTED MAJOR ISSUES WITHIN THE FOSTERING SERVICE

**A recent survey of UK foster carers carried out by GMB has highlighted increasing levels of insecurity and dissatisfaction at the way local authorities manage their fostering service.**

GMB can reveal that more than 90% of those surveyed have called for greater job security and employment rights. Other areas of concern that have been flagged up by foster carers include poor organisation and a general lack of respect.

As part of the consultation, GMB will be submitting evidence to the Education Committee inquiry into fostering which will look at a number of fostering issues, including the recruitment and retention of foster carers. GMB will also make a written submission on behalf of foster carers on the proposed changes to the Children and Social Work Bill.

Rachel Harrison, Organiser, said: **Foster carers are seen by some as an easy target and a way of making cuts by some local authorities. These are isolated individuals, working in their own homes, discouraged from talking to other foster carers, with no employment rights or entitlements to trade union representation. As a result, foster carers right across the country are becoming unionised. They have turned to GMB and we have successfully challenged local authorities, ensuring our members are properly consulted and negotiated with on changes affecting them and also the children they care for."**

 **FOLLOW US**  
 @GMBCampaigns  
 GMB Yorkshire and North Derbyshire Region

**September 2016 Latest Inflation**  
 Headline Inflation Rate (RPI All Items) 2%  
 Consumer Price Index - 1%

**UNIONLINE**  
 YOUR TRADE UNION LAW FIRM  
**0300 333 0303**  
[www.unionline.co.uk](http://www.unionline.co.uk)

## THE ACTIVIST

GMB - Grove Hall - 60 College Grove Road - Wakefield - WF1 3RN

0345 337 7777 [www.gmbbyorkshire.org.uk](http://www.gmbbyorkshire.org.uk)

# The Activist

## GMB CONDEMNS ASOS FOR 'COINING IT IN' AS PROFITS SOAR

Fast-fashion retailer shows a 37% increase in profits as campaigners continue to call for the company to respect its workers. GMB, the union for ASOS workers, has called for the online fast-fashion retailer to respect its workforce and employ some basic fairness in the workplace, as the company prepares to unveil its full-year results. Analysts at Shore Capital have predicted that before tax profits will increase from £46.1m to £63.1m, a jump of 37%.

GMB and workers at ASOS's Barnsley distribution centre have been running a campaign at the warehouse - the site of the old Grimethorpe Colliery - since August 2015. Recent investigations by Buzzfeed and the BBC have detailed serious concerns about conditions and working practices at the company's warehouse. The concerns were echoed by Iain Wright MP who - as Chair of the Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee led the inquiry into conditions at Sports Direct - has pledged to investigate. The union is coupling work on the ground with a digital campaign calling on ASOS management to commit to treating workers with respect.

Neil Derrick, GMB Regional Secretary, said: **"We're seeing a familiar story play out - massive profits for those at the top, made on the back of poor pay, terms and conditions for those making 'fast fashion' a reality. ASOS are quite literally coining it in while agency workers worry whether they'll get enough hours next week to pay the bills. We're simply asking ASOS to treat the people who keep their warehouses moving with a bit of respect - that can't be too much to ask in the 21st Century. If ASOS bosses are serious about providing fashion with integrity - which is one of their slogans - then they can make sure their working conditions are fair, that wages and contracts mean people can live a decent life and that no one is subject to oppressive security and surveillance measures just for doing their jobs."**

**TELL ASOS BOSSES...**  **GMB@ASOS**



**"TREAT YOUR WORKERS WITH RESPECT"**

## SHEFFIELD BIN DISPUTE CONTINUES

GMB members at Veolia have been running intermittent strikes and have an overtime ban on in Sheffield. Lee Parkinson, GMB Organiser for the site said: **"Our members are asking for no more than an inflationary uplift in their pay of 2%. As we see the Veolia business in Sheffield grow year on year at a time when the rest of the public sector is decimated, it's only right the workers get their fair share of those Veolia profits."** Recent talks at Veolia have been positive and we are hopeful that these workers will get that fair pay settlement. Continuing, Lee said: **I am proud of each and everyone of the striking workers and I have given them my word that GMB will support them in this pay battle no matter how long that takes."**

Picture of a bin man showing strike-breakers what he thinks of their efforts on the Sheffield bin strike.



## CARE SECTOR FORUM

**Do you work in the care sector?** Our next forum will be held on Wednesday, 16th November from 10am to 3pm at our Regional Office in Wakefield. We will be discussing the issues that affect you and how together we can address the underfunding in care. Please confirm attendance with Vicky Austin at [victoria.austin@gmb.org.uk](mailto:victoria.austin@gmb.org.uk) or ring **0345 337 7777** - We hope you can join us.

## YOUR HEALTH, YOUR SAFETY

In October the region held its second Health & Safety Forum. The event was well attended with more than 30 reps joining in the debate and discussion. The theme for the forum was Asbestos in the Workplace and those in attendance were encouraged to make sure that GMB members in their workplaces who may have come into contact with asbestos complete a GMB asbestos questionnaire. The forum also discussed the strategy for workplace inspections. The region now has three designated health & safety weeks where reps are encouraged to carry out workplace inspections in their place of work. Jeremy Hague from the Yorkshire & Humber Asbestos Support Group also delivered a presentation. Delegates took the opportunity to get on board with World Mental Health Day by signing pledge cards. You can watch Colin Kirkham getting behind the campaign by clicking this link: <https://youtu.be/d04dDYcraVc>

# THE ACTIVIST

GMB - Grove Hall - 60 College Grove Road - Wakefield - WF1 3RN

0345 337 7777 [www.gmb.yorkshire.org.uk](http://www.gmb.yorkshire.org.uk)

# The Activist



## GMB YOUNG MEMBERS PROTEST AT TORY CONFERENCE

GMB young members from across our nine regions gathered in Birmingham in October to demonstrate outside the Tory Party Conference. The theme of the demo was 'No More Mental Health Cuts.' Raising awareness of mental health at work has been one of the main campaigns for the regional and national Young Members' Networks this year. They have made connections with Labour Mental Health MPs and Councillors across the country to highlight awareness and to ask them to get involved in the campaign. On the day of the demo they were joined by ex Shadow Minister for Mental Health, Luciana Berger MP. Luciana marched with our young members to help show the Tories that mental health matters.

## GMB'S JAWAD GOES INTERNATIONAL

GMB young member Jawad Khan was lucky enough to be selected to attend a summit organised by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Central Finance and Contracts Unit (CFCU) which was held in Antalya in Turkey.

It was part of an EU-funded project aimed at creating links between the European Trade Union Confederation and Turkish trade unions. Jawad heard feedback from project leaders and took part in workshops on topics such as organising migrant and refugee workers, which has been one of the key aims of Turkish trade unions.



Jawad Khan addressing the delegation in Turkey



## GETTING READY FOR UNIVERSAL CREDIT

NEIL SHARPLES - GMB LEGAL OFFICER

Over the coming months and years the Government will be rolling out Universal Credit in your area. This is a substantial change to the benefits system that will affect those in or out of work who are on a low income. It will replace the means tested benefits of Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and Working and Child Tax Credits. While there will be winners and losers under the new system there is likely to be an overall reduction to the amount in benefits that will be available to claimants.

GMB considers it vital that the most vulnerable in society are able to claim benefits to which they are entitled to under the new system. Within the region the legal department currently assists members in providing advice and appealing decisions on the work related benefits of Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments and Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefits. The introduction of Universal Credit will affect the current arrangements that the region has for providing assistance with Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment Support Allowance, which is currently under review. However, this should not result in any reduction to the current service provided to GMB members.

The roll out of Universal Credit has been less than plain sailing to date and we anticipate that our members may encounter some difficulties when they either make a new claim or their current benefits are migrated to the new system. Universal Credit will now be administered by one single Government department, the DWP. It is likely that mistakes will be made when the new system is introduced, particularly as some of the benefits being rolled up into Universal Credit have not been traditionally handled by the DWP in the past. Barriers to making a claim for Universal Credit have already been put in place by the Government by making claimants for Universal Credit apply online. Persons making the claim will more often than not be amongst the poorest in society, without access to a computer or the internet. Being a member of GMB will provide some assurance in navigating the benefits system when it is most needed. **For further advice please contact GMB on 0345 337 7777.**

## THE ACTIVIST

GMB - Grove Hall - 60 College Grove Road - Wakefield - WF1 3RN

0345 337 7777 [www.gmb.yorkshire.org.uk](http://www.gmb.yorkshire.org.uk)

# The Activist

## LIFE LONG LEARNING

When Andrew Wilburn from Rockware Wheatley Branch was made redundant after 27 years with the same employer, he thought he had no where to turn. In his own words Andrew said: **“I was not confident to apply for jobs as I needed help with my CV and qualifications; I was advised to contact my union, the GMB. I was put in touch with Sarah Barnes, a Project Worker from the Productive Learning Project. Sarah helped me rebuild my CV and find out what qualifications I needed to gain new employment.**

**I was advised to apply for support from my Branch’s Learning Fund, the Regional Learning Fund and the National Learning Fund, all of which has given me the opportunity to gain my CPCS (Construction Plant Competence Scheme) Telehandling qualification and help find another job. Redundancy felt like the end for me after being a loyal employee of 27 years, but it was not the end. GMB picked me up and helped me rebuild my working life. I would like to thank GMB and my branch for everything they have helped me achieve.”**

Andrew Wilburn taking his CPCS test



## GMB LEARNING PROJECT GETS A WELCOME BOOST

Congratulations to Sally Harris and Bartlomiej Bardz who recently joined the region’s Productive Learning Project. They will be with the team until the 31st March 2017. Their job will be to assist Organisers and Union Learner Reps to source and deliver training and education to GMB members and to use the vehicle of the life-long learning agenda to encourage none members to join GMB. If you or any of your members need to access the project you can contact Roseanna Ford direct on 01924-887277 or email: [roseanna.ford@gmb.org.uk](mailto:roseanna.ford@gmb.org.uk) who will sign-post you to the most relevant project worker. You can also visit [www.gmblearning.com](http://www.gmblearning.com) to find out more.



Union Learner Rep, Lee Bennett pictured with Walkley Lodge Manager, Alicia Doolan and Productive Learning Project Worker, Sarah Barnes

## NEW LEARNING AGREEMENT

### AT WALKLEY LODGE

The Productive Learning Project has just signed a new learning agreement with Roseberry Care’s Walkley Lodge Care Home in Sheffield. The home manager, Alicia Doolan, signed the agreement saying: **“I fully support GMB members and staff at Walkley Lodge getting involved with life-long learning.”** The agreement includes paid time-off for learning where appropriate, including vocational qualifications, numeracy, literacy and ICT and ensuring that Union Learning Reps are given paid release for training and to carry out their role.

Union Learner Rep Lee Bennett has been instrumental in gaining this agreement and is doing some fantastic work to encourage all GMB members and staff to engage in life-long learning. Well done Lee!

## INSPIRATIONAL WOMENS EVENT

A Tribute To Jo Cox MP

FRIDAY 11TH  
NOVEMBER  
7 PM

SPECIAL GUESTS

MARGARET ASPINALL  
DESIREE WILBURN  
RISWANA AHMED  
TRACY BRABIN  
AND MORE

AT BATLEY OLDER PEOPLES CENTRE

TICKETS £2.00

CONTACT  
EMILY:  
[EMILEEWARRI@HOTMAIL.CO.UK](mailto:EMILEEWARRI@HOTMAIL.CO.UK)

“We have far more in common than that which divides us”

# THE ACTIVIST

GMB - Grove Hall - 60 College Grove Road - Wakefield - WF1 3RN

0345 337 7777 [www.gmbyorkshire.org.uk](http://www.gmbyorkshire.org.uk)