

The Activist

GMB News From Around The Region



Striking Workers Stand Together At Arcadia



GMB MEMBERS WALK OUT IN PROTEST AT SIR PHILIP GREEN'S 'WORKHOUSE' CONDITIONS

GMB members at a Topshop warehouse walked out in anger at 'workhouse conditions'. Staff at Spectrum for Arcadia, a division of the DHL Logistics Supply Chain in Leeds, downed tools following a dispute over pay. Protracted pay negotiations with the company left GMB members dejected and feeling undervalued after their pay claim was thrown out by the company. A trade dispute was registered with Spectrum for Arcadia and GMB members in Leeds took coordinated strike action with its sister site in Solihull on the 24th and 26th February. A GMB member at the site, who wishes to remain anonymous, said: **"Our reps have done everything they can to try to sort this out. We've never been a workplace that just pays minimum pay and I've worked here for over 12 years. Things are getting worse - you used to be one of the family if you got a job here. Now it feels like a workhouse back in the day."**

Doug Cooper, GMB Organiser for the Leeds site said: **"Our members working at Spectrum for Arcadia will not be used as kitchen utensils to fuel the greed of billionaire employer Sir Philip Green. They deserve better than a paltry statutory minimum rise."**

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GMB CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR 2017

Have you had your Calendar yet?

If not, then you can download a copy from our regional website or ring **0345 337 7777** and request a copy.

GMB Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Regional Calendar of Events 2017



TOPSHOP WAREHOUSE WORKERS ARE WALKING OUT OVER PAY AND CONDITIONS
 ADD TO THE BAG AND SUPPORT THEM NOW: WWW.GMB.ORG.UK/TOPSHOP



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The Activist@Branch Weekend

GMB'S REGIONAL EVENT OF THE YEAR

In February more than 170 GMB activists from across Yorkshire & North Derbyshire came together at the Holiday Inn, Garforth, for the 2017 Branch Event of the Year.

The event, now in its eighth year, celebrates the work that GMB activists do day in day out in their workplaces and local communities on behalf of GMB members and for the betterment of society.

This year the event saw the launch of the GMB's Jo Cox Learning Fund, named in memory of the late MP. High-profile guest speakers included GMB General Secretary Tim Roache, Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell MP and Linda McAvan MEP.

Workshops were held during the day and activists took the opportunity to take part in debate on a number of key issues including Rebuilding Communities After Brexit, Modern Slavery, Leaving Europe and Making Parliament Work For Us.

BRANCHES HONOURED

A Branch Awards Ceremony took place in the evening and this year's recipient of the Branch of the Year (The Kerry May Award) went to GMB North Derbyshire Branch, with Brighouse General Branch winning Community Campaign of the Year and Yorkshire Ambulance Service winning Equality Champion of the Year. The Class of 2016 Award went to group leader Brogan Fletcher and David Holt in recognition of the outstanding work they did in organising and recruiting in their own workplaces whilst undertaking GMB training.

Sunday morning saw a presentation of the Dying To Work Campaign which GMB has signed up to and an empowering address from John Dunn from the Orgreave Truth & Justice Campaign.

Neil Derrick, GMB's Regional Secretary for Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region and host of the event, said: **"What a fantastic activists' conference this was; it was great to see so many first time delegates at this annual event. The calibre of speakers this year was second to none and I am especially proud that our region launched the Jo Cox Learning Fund in memory of the late MP and that Jo's family were present for the launch."**

First time delegate Karen Rowling from Brighouse General Branch, said: **"What an excellent event. It was pitched perfectly and the speakers were inspirational. I would definitely recommend any GMB member who hasn't had the chance to attend the Branch Weekend to become active in their branch so they can get along to next year's event."**



GMB North Derbyshire Branch



Class of 2016



Yorkshire Ambulance Service Branch



Brighouse General Branch

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The Activist@Branch Weekend

Top Table: Steve Jennings, Neil Derrick, Andy Irving, Pete Davies, Sue Wood and Desiree Wilburn



John Dunn



Diane Wragg



Jean & Gordon Leadbeater with Neil Derrick



Sarah Owen, Liz Robinson & Ian Butler



Neil Derrick, Regional Secretary



Javaid Akhtar, Andy Irving & John McDonnell MP



Ricky Allen, Mr Khan, Ryan Hodgkinson, Summer Risebury & Jawad Khan



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GMB NHS STRESS SURVEY REVEALS WORRYING FINDINGS

GMB can reveal that the top three major causes of pressure for its members working in the NHS include staffing levels, morale at work and work related stress following a recent confidential survey carried out by GMB. Respondents went on to say that one of the major concerns is the detrimental impact that work related stress is having on patient care.

GMB members working in the NHS across Yorkshire & North Derbyshire were surveyed between October 2016 and January 2017 and the results come as no surprise. GMB workplace representatives have reported that the number of members approaching them with concerns over staffing levels leading to increased low morale and work related stress has risen dramatically over recent years. Staff are gravely concerned that they cannot deliver the quality of care that should be provided and are fearful that the pressures being placed upon them will lead to a deterioration in the quality of patient care. GMB will step-up its campaign to address staffing level issues which are clearly impacting on our members' morale and stress levels.

Stacey Booth, GMB Organiser for the NHS, said: **“The results of the survey confirm what our members have been saying for a long time now and our NHS workplace representatives are in the process of writing to all NHS employers across the region for their response to the survey findings.”**

GMB Branch Secretary, Martin Jackson, has already contacted the Director of Nursing at Barnsley District Hospital to highlight the problems and to date has received no official response. Commenting, Mr Jackson said: **“Mid Staffs was one individual hospital in the NHS that was found to have a record of poor quality patient care as a result of lack of training and poor staffing levels and Mid Staffs will be the norm if the current trend continues.”**



GMB's newly formed Professional Drivers' Committee drive the campaign for better taxi regulation

GMB CALL FOR BETTER TAXI REGULATION

GMB members from the private hire and hackney trade held a demo outside of Sheffield Town Hall in protest over 'wild-west' deregulation of private hire and hackney licences. The GMB linked up with other taxi trade representatives to hold demos in towns and cities across the UK.

The Government's Deregulation Bill has created a 'wild-west' situation in many towns and cities, where some licensing authorities such as Transport for London (TfL) are issuing licenses for taxis who are then operating outside of TfL jurisdiction.

Cross-border plying for hire is taking place with reports of TfL operating and plying for hire in York, Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds, Southend, Hatfield, Brighton, Cardiff and Reading to name just a few. Recently in Southend licenses were refused to some drivers, who then went to TfL to obtain a license, so they could operate in Southend.

UBER who are not allowed a license to operate in places such as Reading and Hatfield, are taking bookings and plying for hire in those areas. This is having a disastrous effect on enforcement and safety and allows unregulated plying for hire. It is reported that over a thousand licenses a month are being issued by TfL, with virtually little or no regulation.

Bob McNeill, GMB Organiser, said: **“Cross-border plying for hire is a real problem for our professional private hire and hackney drivers. The Deregulation Bill has meant licensing authorities such as TfL are free to issue licenses without rigorous checks and safeguards in place, allowing companies such as UBER to operate without consequences.”**

GMB Branch Secretary for South Yorkshire Professional Drivers' Branch, Ibrar Hussain, said: **“Cross-border hiring is killing our taxi trade; The Government needs to act urgently as deregulation is putting public safety at risk. We need authorities to enforce standards and safeguards.”**

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GMB organisers and local authority convenors say We♥UNIONS

FEEL THE LOVE WITH ♥ UNIONS WEEK

Heart Unions week was another great success for GMB with a number of initiatives taking place across the region. Heart Unions week is a national event organised by the TUC that many of us took part in 2016. From the 8-14 February 2017 GMB celebrated the great work carried out by activists and members in workplaces and in society. The aim of the week is also to promote the benefits of trade unionism and to sign-up new members.

GMB organiser and members at Sheffield Children's Hospital say We♥UNIONS



Regional Secretary, Neil Derrick, said: "Heart Unions week is a great opportunity to celebrate the work our activists do and to promote the benefits of the trade union movement. It's a time to reflect and be proud of our past victories and to make sure we never stop fighting to improve the quality of life for our members and their families."



GMB organiser and members at MEARs say We♥UNIONS



GMB FOSTER CARERS MEET WITH MPS TO DEMAND PROPER RECOGNITION

GMB foster carers have met with MPs in London to demand proper recognition for dedicated members who look after vulnerable children. Rachel Harrison, GMB lead Organiser on Foster Care, gave evidence to the Fostering Inquiry at a Select Committee (you may remember from a previous issue of *The Activist* that GMB made a 19-page written submission to the inquiry). The delegation of carers also met Labour MPs following the hearing, including Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell and Paula Sherriff.

Disturbing new figures show just 42% of foster carers felt their allowance met the full cost of looking after fostered children. This compares to 80% in 2014, showing huge cuts in local government funding are badly hurting our foster carers.

Rachel Harrison, said: "We're proud to be the union to represent foster carers. These people give their all to look after the most vulnerable children in society and it was vital we got across to MPs the challenges faced by our members and how we can work with others to push for improvements in the foster care system, for the benefit of both the children and carers."

Colleen Callaghan, foster carer and GMB member, said: "It was fantastic to see MPs listening to our trade union really represent foster carers and give us the opportunity to tell it like it is - explaining to politicians what's needed to improve foster care in this country, for us and the children we care for. It was a welcome opportunity to see how politics can actually relate to us and hopefully change things for the better."

As we go to print the GMB can report that ministers are to climb down over key parts of the Children and Social Work Bill. The controversial proposals would have let local councils set aside children's rights, including opting out of all fostering regulations and the duty to provide support and training for foster families.

WHEREVER THERE IS INJUSTICE GMB WILL TAKE UP THE FIGHT!

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Paula Sherriff MP (centre) with film buffs

I, DANIEL BLAKE

“Benefits should go to the ‘really disabled’ rather than those who are ‘taking pills at home, who suffer from anxiety’. These are some of the latest comments from Theresa May’s Head of Policy on Personal Independence Payments. It is a symptom of the toxic culture around welfare benefits. It’s a culture that has been fostered by this Government and the previous Coalition. Clearly comments like this from No. 10 do little to counter the stigma and the harsh realities of the benefits system.

The punitive changes to social security for sick and disabled people have recently been laid bare by Ken Loach’s film, ‘I Daniel Blake’. So I was glad to play a small role in countering the widespread misrepresentation of welfare recipients and to have the opportunity to host a screening of the award winning film, kindly sponsored by GMB, in aid of a local foodbank run by Fusion Giving. The venue, The New Picture House, is an independently run, not for profit community cinema and they were most generous in their accommodation of the event. At the interval they served up a fabulous curry and cake in support of the fundraising effort.

In total our collection raised £200 as well as a huge amount of food and women’s sanitary items for the Fusion Giving foodbank. It is shocking that in modern day Britain, anyone is relying on foodbanks for basic essentials, but nevertheless, there is a real and stark need for the support they offer. It is part of my role as a Member of Parliament to expose the truth about the impact that the Government’s punitive, humiliating policies and the real and lasting poverty that people are being forced to endure as a result. There are people in my constituency who tell me about their real life experiences that directly reflect the issues highlighted by ‘I, Daniel Blake’ and I will do all I can to stand up for them. What’s more, I’m proud to be a GMB MP, fighting to make sure their voices are heard in Parliament.”

Paula Sherriff, MP for Dewsbury

MARCH 4 THE NHS

An army of demonstrators from the region joined other trade unionists, campaigners and ordinary people in the fight to save the NHS in London on Saturday 4th March 2017.

Activists joined the National Demonstration to defend the NHS against cuts, closures and privatisation. The march supported a fully funded, publicly owned NHS and social care service.

Neil Derrick, GMB Regional Secretary, said: "Yorkshire & North Derbyshire region along with other GMB regions came together in London as a show of strength and solidarity for one of the greatest institutions this country has ever seen. We marched together to protect the National Health Service from the greed and corruption of private companies. “We will march again on the 1st April in Leeds and we will keep on marching until we know our NHS is back in safe hands. Our message to the Government is quite simple; We will not stand by while they dismantle one of our county’s greatest achievements, the NHS.”



Join us in Leeds

Saturday, 1st April 2017

(meet at the Civic Hall - 10.30am)

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GMB WELCOME GREEN CARE HOME DECISION

GMB welcomes the news that Leeds City Council has secured a future for The Green Care Home in Seacroft following extensive campaigning by GMB.

The Council has confirmed The Green will remain open as a recovery facility working in partnership with the NHS. The Green had previously faced the threat of closure, as the Council had to find savings in the face of continued significant cuts to its budget by central Government.

Darran Travis, GMB Organiser, said: **“We’re pleased we’ve got a Labour Administration in Leeds which has worked with us to protect council jobs and front line services for the people of this city. The Council has had some really difficult decisions to make because of the brutal cuts to its budget by Government, but they’ve found a good solution for The Green which protects it for continued use by the local community and safeguards jobs.”**

Cllr Judith Blake, Leader of Leeds City Council, said: **“We made a commitment last year to find a solution that ensured The Green remains in use to serve the local community and by working with the local NHS we have ensured that will happen. Protecting vital front line services like this in the face of massive Government cuts is a major priority for us as a Labour Administration.”**



Latest Inflation - January 2017

- Consumer Prices Index (CPI) **1.8 %**
- Headline Inflation Rate (RPI All items) **2.6 %**
- Underlying Inflation Rate (RPIX excl mortgages) **2.9 %**



Neil Cole Signs Agreement With WCAT

GMB SIGNS RECOGNITION AGREEMENT WITH WAKEFIELD CITY ACADEMIES TRUST

GMB is pleased to announce that a new recognition agreement has been signed with Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT). Neil Cole, GMB Organiser, signed the agreement on behalf of the GMB. WCAT is a Multi Academy Trust which run schools across a number of GMB regions and Neil is our representative on the Joint Consultation & Negotiations Committee.

Neil said: **“This agreement shows WCAT's commitment to work with the recognised trade unions and provides a framework for us to work together for the benefit of our members.”**



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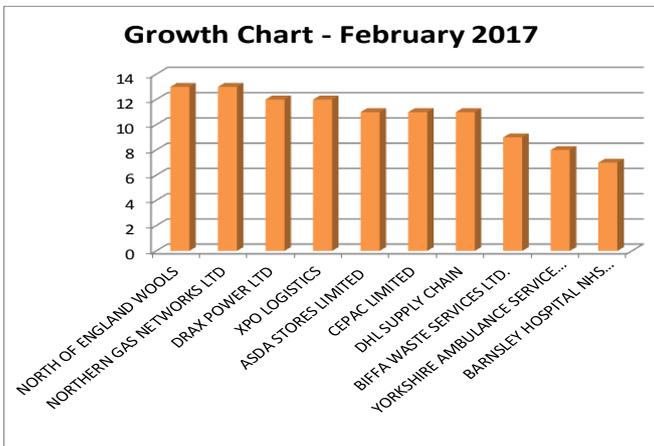
L to R: Katherine Mitchell GMB Organiser, Gary Birch GMB Rep and Ian Brown, National GMB Rep

BRITISH GAS EMPLOYEES GET SIGNED-UP

The Regional Organising Team recently held a recruitment and organising session at British Gas in Leeds. The event, held at Newbridge House, was well attended and it was a great opportunity to catch-up with long-standing members and speak to potential members about the benefits of GMB membership.

Katherine Mitchell from the Regional Organising Team, said: **“It was great to meet GMB members; we had such a positive response and signed up quite a few new members on the day and British Gas employees were keen to see us more often. GMB Rep Gary Birch along with National Rep Ian Brown and Organiser Gary Baker were also on hand to speak to members.”**

We are planning regular events going forward - If you would like the Regional Organising Team to support campaigns and activity in your workplace please get in touch through your officer.



CASTLEFORD TIGERS LAUNCH LADIES TEAM

Following months of hard work Castleford Tigers Ladies team has finally reached their launch. Lindsay Anfield, Head Coach, said: **“It was great to meet our sponsors at the official launch and seeing the girls receive their shirts; a reward for all the hard work and commitment. I also look forward to our first season as Castleford Tigers Ladies and hope the town of Castleford will give us as much support as they give the men.”**

Steve Jennings, Senior Organiser, said: **“It’s great to see a women’s team at Castleford Tigers and it’s not before time. Good luck from all at GMB.”**

CONGRATULATIONS TO BATLEY & SPEN CLP on the appointment of their new officers. Craig Looker was re-elected as secretary, Tom Kowalski was elected as Chair, Emily Warrillow was elected as Women’s Officer, Jawad Khan was elected as Young Members’ Officer, Cath Pinder was elected as Campaign Co-ordinator and David Hoyle was elected as Trade Union Liaison Officer - **And all 6 are GMB members!**



L to R: Jawad Khan, Cath Pinder, Tracy Brabin MP, Craig Looker and Emily Warrillow

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