



Southampton District Branch



Issue 14—March 2016

Register to vote

at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>.

If you live in Southampton and are unable to use the online registration process, it is still possible to apply by emailing elections@southampton.gov.uk. If you have an A3 printer you can download and print a form from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voter-registration-forms-paper-versions>, or you can telephone 023 8083 2245 and ask for a paper application to be sent to you.

Completed forms should be returned in the reply paid envelope enclosed or via:

FREEPOST
RTKU-LUJL-HCYG
Electoral Services
Civic Centre
Southampton
SO14 7LY



Polling stations are open from 7am until 10pm on election day, 5 May.

Stamp Sexism out of the Workplace

7 to 11 March 2016

Civic Centre Foyer

As part of International Women's Day, the Branch will have a display in the Civic Centre Foyer highlighting issues around sexism experienced by women in the workplace. You will be able to comment on your own experiences anonymously.

Sexism in the workplace, though illegal, is still an issue across the United Kingdom. Though there are laws in place to protect the rights of all workers, many workplaces seem to ignore these laws and continue on as they see fit. A concerted effort from all employers and employees is needed to ensure that all individuals are treated fairly and with respect at work. And why would any one want to settle for any less?

Some examples of sexism in the workplace are:

- Being expected to make the tea
- Enduring sexual innuendos
- Having appearance/clothing commented on

sexism

SEE IT. SAY IT. STOP IT.



"That's a very good suggestion, Miss Wilson - perhaps one of the men would like to make it?"

Branch Annual General Meeting Thursday, 17 March 2016

12.30 to 1.30pm

Conference Rooms 3 / 4, Civic Centre

Speaker—

Dr Alan Whitehead, MP for
Southampton Test

Sandwiches will be available from 12 noon.
A free prize raffle will be held with a total of
£250 prize money.

**Free prize
draw
£250
in prize money**

UNISON South East Women's Committee Annual Report 2015/2016

Although the attendance at 2015 national women's conference was very high, the numbers from the South East were good but only a slight improvement on the previous year. The South East women's committee had a number of motions ruled out of order by standing orders committee. However, of the motions that were accepted—proportionality and stop porn culture, both were carried. Regional rep Cathy Roblin did a great job moving the motions and leading the delegation meeting. Generally there was good feedback from delegates and visitors about conference and the members thought the workshops were well run and the topics were relevant and interesting. Feedback included however, that it was very frustrating that conference ran out of time to hear all motions.

During women's history month in March there were 24 local branch events held to celebrate both women's history month and International Women's Day. Most events were linked to recruitment days but there were also a few events where talks were given at branch AGMs on various themes related to women's equality e.g. women and the cuts.

Leading on from the events during March, additional bite-sized presentations on women's equality such as pregnancy and maternity discrimination, women's health, bullying and harassment, have been developed to include a short powerpoint which can run continually on a laptop at a recruitment event. Resource handouts have also been developed to accompany the presentations.

The campaigning work of the committee for the first part of this year focused on the general election and resources. Newsletters, postcards and leaflets were developed to raise awareness amongst as many women members as possible of the importance of using their vote. New campaigning resources have been developed throughout the year to be used at recruitment events as mentioned in the above section.

The Fighting Fund Area Organiser's project working on increasing the participation of low-paid women and developing a women's leadership training programme came to an end at the beginning to October.

The project has been very successful in carrying out training needs analysis with women already holding senior posts and with women who were new to senior roles in the union. A programme of training was then designed around the training needs highlighted in the training needs analysis. All of the modules that have run to date have been very well attended and the feedback has been extremely positive. Next year's women's leadership programme has recently been advertised in the updated branch women's officer passport and the regional education programme.

The project also looked at organising amongst low paid women—a group, that is, according to many branches in the South East, traditionally hard to organise. Surveys were sent to low-paid women members in some of the region's largest branches and other work was undertaken including women's meetings in workplaces, particularly women working in outsourced workplaces. A full evaluation report can be found on the South East website under the women's page.

The training courses available to women in the South East region have expanded considerably since the creation of the branch women's officer passport and more recently the creation of the series of training modules for women

leaders in UNISON. There are now ten passport courses for women who are officers in their branches and four courses under the women leaders programme.

Every year there are approximately an additional three complementary courses such as assertiveness skills, women's history and women's forum. A copy of the branch women's officer passport can be found on the South East website on the women's page.

This year all courses have been very well attended.

The regional women's forum on 11 to 13 September was held in Eastbourne and was well attended. 40 women attended from across the region and there were four guest speakers. Monica Hirst spoke on Friday night about UNISONs Organising Space and how women activists can use this technology to share experiences and best practice and generally support one another.

On Saturday morning Sanchita Hosali, Director of the British Institute of Human Rights, spoke about the growing need to raise awareness of what our human rights actually are and how these rights are being threatened by the governments' agenda for a new Bill of Rights. Caroline Lake, UNISON FFAO women's project, spoke on Saturday afternoon on the overall evaluation of the women leaders' project and the forum also heard from three women who are currently on that programme.

On the Sunday, Maggi Ferncombe, the recently appointed South East regional secretary, spoke about the attacks on trade unions and workers and the demands on all of us for the foreseeable future in defending workers and workers rights and how the region will start to take that work forward by developing a new regional strategy.

In general throughout 2015, attendance at the regional women's committee meetings was good. The AGM was well attended and a large number of new women were elected onto the women's committee for 2016. The guest speaker was Chris Coates, former TUC library archivist who spoke on the history of women in the trade union movement and shared some fascinating insights about the barriers that women faced within their own trade unions and how these had to be overcome in order that they could organise and campaign for better pay and better terms and conditions.

Register for a postal vote

Postal vote application forms are available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-a-postal-vote> or you can telephone 023 8083 2245 and ask for a paper application to be sent to you. If you live in Southampton completed forms should be returned to:

FREEPOST
RTKU-LUJL-HCYG
Electoral Services
Civic Centre
Southampton
SO14 7LY

by Tuesday 19 April
to enable you to
vote in this year's
local election on 5
May.



Find us on Facebook—
Southampton District Unison

National Women's Conference 2016

Motion 22 Woman's rights are human rights

The first of our two regional motions moved by Charlie Dacke Chair of the Fareham Branch entitled 'Women's Rights are Human Rights' was probably one of the most contentious of this year's Women's conference. The motion which had been agreed at our yearly regional Forum called on UNISON to lobby Amnesty to make our views clear that 'full decriminalisation of the sex industry and its profiteers is not in line with our policy of prostitution as it is an infringement on women's rights'. Claire Ransom our branch delegate spoke very eloquently in support of the motion and the arguments which she presented were made in an informed and reasoned way which demonstrated that the sex industry is a form of violence on women and that by adopting the Nordic Model which criminalises the buyers of sex and the pimps while funding exit strategies has proved successful in reducing the demand for prostitution and changing public attitudes towards the sex industry. Claire made our region proud of her input in support of the motion and despite a close vote it was supported by women at the conference.

Motion 32 Pro women, pro choice

Motion 32 was submitted by South East Region and as one of the Regional Representatives from Region Cathy Roblin formally moved the motion at National Women's Conference.

Our Region's Pro women pro-choice motion was focused on a pregnant woman's right to choose and to have the right to obtain treatment and advice from family planning and abortion clinics free from harassment and intimidation. The motion called for National Women's Committee to give public support to the "Back Off" campaign that is working towards establishment of protest-free zones outside centres which would provide the reassurance and security women and healthcare staff need. To lobby MPs on a statutory 'buffer zone' for all pickets outside clinics Cathy rightly reminded conference that there are many reasons a woman might make the decision to have an abortion ranging from: rape, domestic abuse, incest and limited finances. Not only are many women working in Public Services on low wages, but as we know with the increasing cost of childcare it can be difficult to balance the books.

It is very much felt by women in our Region that if anti-abortion protestors weren't protesting outside abortion clinics 'buffer zones' would not be required, but as it happens they do and we should be doing all we can to ensure women's rights are protected. This was clearly felt by the majority of women attending conference too and when it went to the vote we were delighted that the motion was carried.

Women's Forum

This year's forum will take place in Eastbourne from 30 September to 2 October. It is open to all women members. For more information contact Cathy Roblin Branch, Women's Officer on 023 8083 2740.

How are regional motions decided?

The regional women's forum is an annual event organised by the regional women's committee to give women members and women stewards the opportunity to meet each other, network and share experiences. With 1 million women members in UNISON, this event inspires, informs and builds the confidence of women to become active in their branches and raise awareness of issues that affect women in the workplace society. If you have ever thought about getting involved in the union and making a difference then come along to the women's forum and learn about 'Women in UNISON' and how we work together to campaign for change. It is at this yearly event that women who attend work collectively to develop ideas for motions to be put forward at Women's Conference. Women will have the opportunity to write and present those motions at this event. These will be put forward to be accepted on the conference agenda and it will be the responsibility of the two regional representatives to expand on the motions and move them at Conference.

2016 Training Courses for Women

UNISON has a range of exciting women only courses which women members can attend. Expenses are paid by the Branch. Courses include Assertiveness Skills, Women's History and Pregnancy and Maternity. Full details of the courses and how to apply are available on our web site—www.unisonsouthamptondistrict.org.uk.



Register to vote—Cut off is 18 April 2016

There is a statutory fee of £85 for failing to register which may be imposed.

Recruit a new member and get a £25 reward

For every new member recruited, you will get a £25 reward. Application forms and further information are available from the UNISON office. New members need to have paid their first subscription before any advice can be given but, in any case, cannot be advised on pre-existing issues.

The new state pension from 6 April 2016

What does it mean for members NI Contributions?

From 6 April the Basic State Pension and Second State Pension (S2P) will end and be combined/ replaced by a new State Pension. Those who are paying reduced rate NI Contributions at the moment because they are in a work place pension scheme that is better than the Second State Pension will start to pay the standard NI contributions and start to earn a higher State Pension.

Who will it apply to?

This will apply to nearly all our members who are contributing to a workplace pension e.g. LGPS, NHSPS and private sector pension schemes.

How are National Insurance Contributions being calculated up to April 2016

If someone earns more than the Lower Earnings Limit currently £5824 a year (£112 a week) they will start to qualify for a State Pension. If they earn above what is called the 'primary' threshold currently £8060 a year (£155 a week) they start to pay NI contributions on earnings above that figure. If they are in the Second State Pension they pay 12% on earnings up to the Upper Earnings Limit (£827 a week from April 2016) that is NOT in a work place pension that is contracted out of the Second State pension. If on the other hand they are not in the Second State pension because they are paying into a work place pension instead that is contracted out of the Second State pension, they currently pay a reduced rate of 10.6% from the primary threshold up to what is called an 'Upper Accrual Point' of £770 a week and then pay 12% up to the Upper earnings Limit. On earnings above the Upper earnings limit the contribution goes down from 12% to 2%. At the moment those who are contracted out also get a further small reduction on earnings between £5824 a year and £8060 a year.

How will National Insurance Contributions be calculated from April 2016

So after 6 April 2016 everyone will be paying 12% between £8060 a year and £43004 a year into the new State Pension. On earnings above Upper Earnings Limit of £43004 a year from April (£827 a week) they will continue to pay just 2%.

What is the message?

For those who reach their State Pension Age after 5 April 2016 will have their State Pension calculated on the new basis. The full State Pension from 6 April 2016 will be £155.65 a week if a person has a minimum of 35 qualifying years and no contracted out service in a work place pension scheme like the LGPS, NHPS etc... If you have a lot of contracted out service and you would have qualified for the pre April Basic State Pension your minimum new State Pension at 6 April 2016 will be the single person's Basic State Pension of £119.30 a week from April not the £155.65 a week. If you are still working after April and earning above the lower earnings limit you will earn extra pension up to the maximum of £155.65 a week (this will be increased in line with the better of average earnings, inflation (CPI) or 2.5%). If your State Pension is less than £155.65 per week you can earn extra state pension up to your State Pension Age or until you reach the maximum pension that starts at £155.65,

whichever occurs first. For every year you pay at the higher rate you would be earning based on the starting pension, £4.45 a week extra pension until you reach State Pension Age or you reach the maximum State Pension (that is $1/35 \times £155.65 = £4.45$ a week).

So for most of our members in workplace schemes they will be paying more NI but earning extra State Pension at a very reasonable price. The new full State Pension is still below the poverty line so members should not leave their workplace pension scheme. In the LGPS where the opt out rates are highest amongst low paid staff the message is if you feel you cannot afford the higher NI and stay in the LGPS consider electing to pay half your normal contributions to the LGPS to get a lower benefit until you can afford to pay at the full rate again. Everyone should apply in writing or on line for an up to date state pension statement <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-a-state-pension-statement>.

What are the other issues?

There is a big issue on who will pay the pension increase on the part of the workplace pension the member would have got if they had contributed to the Second State Pension instead of their workplace pension.

Until April this increase has mainly been paid as an addition to the state pension. From April depending on the rules of the scheme either the pension scheme will now have to pay or it simply won't increase in line with inflation anymore for anyone who reaches State Pension Age after April 2016.

Public Sector schemes like the LGPS and NHSPS would pay the increase unless the government allows them to change the rules. Good news for members but another burden on the schemes that could feed into further cuts and job losses. There is a danger that a number of women and men who reach state pension age after April will be worse off as spouses pensions attached to the basic state pension are being withdrawn. They will not be able to increase their state pension using their spouse or civil partner's (or late or former spouse or civil partner's) NI contributions but if they are widowed they may still be able to inherit some additional State Pension under transitional rules.

The increase and equalisation in State Pension Age has meant that particularly women born in the first half of 1950's are being faced with a larger than expected increase in their State Pension Age. The government is being pressured into looking again at the transitional period and possible compensation for women whose State Pension Age is set to rise by more than a year by April 2020. There is an ongoing petition with currently 148,000 signatories and ongoing debates in parliament.

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/110776>

A campaigning group called WASPI Women Against State Pension Inequality is very active on this issue as are many politicians especially Labour and SNP.

*Printed and published by UNISON Southampton District Branch,
Civic Centre, Southampton, SO14 7NB
023 8083 2740
branchsecretary@unisonsouthampton.org.uk*