

South East CAMPAIGNER



SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSFORMATION PLANS

You may not know it, but over the past year local NHS leaders across England have been meeting to draw up plans to overhaul the health service.

The country has been split into 44 regions, with each asked to come up with a strategy to make services fit for the 21st century. The initiative – called Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) – has been shrouded in secrecy after NHS England bosses encouraged local leaders to keep them quiet. (BBC News website).

The plans have been developed with local councils following the publication of the Five Year Forward View plan for the NHS published in late 2014. Only there's a problem. A big problem. And the problem is funding.

The government has said that it "asked the NHS what funding it needed and has given them that funding". But NHS leaders know that this has left a big hole in their finances – a £22billion hole. The Prime Minister has said that the NHS should "focus on efficiencies to fill the £22billion hole."

However early indications from the plans suggest that the efficiencies may include the closure of wards, maternity units, A&E Departments and even entire hospitals. Others may be centralised across wide geographical areas. When do efficiencies become cuts?

All these changes could have a significant impact on services locally.

Yet a recent survey showed that 6 out of 7 members of the public still are completely unaware of the existence of STPs.

So what should happen next?
Over the weeks and months ahead

UNISON members are asked to raise questions about what the impact of the STPs will be in their respective areas to MPs, Councillors, Health and Wellbeing Boards and council Health Overview and Scrutiny Boards.

All UNISON Branches (not just Health branches) are also encouraged to hold briefings on this wider citizenship issue – contact Tony Jones at UNISON Regional Office for details, and stay update by visiting our website: unionsoutheast.org.uk.



UNISON South East members showed their support for the NHS on Saturday 4th March by turning out in coach-loads for the march organised by Health Campaigns Together. Staff, Regional Council members and members from all service groups joined together with other unions, organisations and campaign groups to tell the government that this cannot go on any longer. The Region sent 11 coaches to London and many more members made their own way to London with flags, banners and placards to defend the best healthcare system in the world.

NHS MARCH





UNISON

NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE 2017

The motions at this year's National Women's Conference (NWC) reflected well the disproportionate impact of almost 10 years of financial austerity on women.

This touches every aspects of our lives and affects our families whether it is due to cuts to public services, cuts to taxes and benefits or job losses, restructures and the rise of zero hour contracts and insecure employment becoming the norm. Conference was also concerned at the alarming increase in the levels of sexism and sexual harassment in our UK schools, workplaces and in society in general. The behaviour and language of the newly elected President of America, Donald Trump and the shocking decision of the Russian parliament to decriminalise domestic violence was at the forefront of delegates' minds.

This year's NWC was well attended and the South East delegation was made up of 80 women – including branch delegates, visitors and women who hold posts at regional and national level.

The two regional reps – Cathy Roblin and Charlie Dacke did a great job in



moving all of the 5 regional motions which discuss topics that touch the lives of thousands of women both in the UK and further afield. Below is a brief synopsis of the motions from the South East, all of which were carried.

1. Retirement – what retirement?;

This motion concerns women's state pensions and the changes that were made to equalise state retirement age for women and men to 65. The motion asks the NWC to support the 'Women Against State Pension Increase Campaign', to campaign for a full package of transitional arrangements for all women born on or after 6th April 1951; for longer term campaigning for a reduction in the equalisation age to

60 and for an adequate universal basic state pension for all citizens.

2. Women and the cuts – strategies for local campaigning: this motion raised the issue of the need to provide women at local level with information on developing locally based campaigns around women's equality issues.

3. 'Protecting the rights of EU women workers in Social Care'

was heard as part of a grouped debate on the wider issues around the impact of the exit from the EU and women's equality. The South East motion however, dealt specifically with the impact of Brexit on migrant women workers working in social care.

4. 'Overexposed and underprepared'

– this motion deals with the 2016 government Women and Equality Select Committee inquiry into the shocking scale of incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools in the UK. The motion calls on the national women's committee to campaign and lobbying the government to implement the 38 recommendations of the inquiry and campaign for better age appropriate sex education.

5. 'Why sickle cell matters'

addresses the concern that not enough people realise the significant increased risk to women with sickle cell who need to be considered at high risk during pregnancy as women are more prone to pain episodes especially in the last few months of pregnancy.

Hampshire Pride

UNISON members from around Hampshire came together to march through Winchester for Hampshire Pride. Bringing together LGBT people from across the county, Hampshire Pride is in its 3rd year and was a great success. It's the first time that UNISON has been present at this Pride, and it was great to meet UNISON members from all public services on the day. We even met some UNISON members who had come from Cornwall to represent!

The Pride parade marched through Winchester city centre, and ended with a street party at the Hampshire County Council offices.

More photos from the day are available on the Hampshire Pride website and on Twitter at #PrideHantsWide



“YOU’RE NEVER TOO OLD TO BE ANGRY”

SOLIDARITY BETWEEN RETIRED MEMBERS OF UNISON SOUTH EAST REGION AND CGT PUBLIC SERVICES IN NORTHERN FRANCE

Around two years ago, retired UNISON member Ruby Cox met up in Paris with CGT representatives Didier Louvet and Ann Simpson to see if there was scope for a closer relationship between retired members of the two unions.

She found not only that our French counterparts were very supportive of the idea, they were dealing with a range of issues very similar to our own, from how to keep retired members in the union to cuts in social care and a hostile media that portrayed older people as a burden on society. As a result of this meeting she raised with her regional RM committee the idea of a project to make this closer relationship a reality and that project is now under way.

Representatives of both unions have now met several times and following on from a meeting at the UNISON Centre last April the CGT demonstrated their commitment to the project by publishing an article in their house magazine laying out our joint aims. They also invited members to follow the development of the project and get involved. In response to this, the South East Region Retired Members committee decided it was time to pay our French colleagues a visit (all previous meetings had involved our French friends coming to us) and this we did on 1st and 2nd December 2016 in Lille. The aims of the visit were to gather information, discover what issues we have in common, get a better understanding of how we can support each other and to compare CGT and UNISON structures for retired members.

UNISON South East and CGT Nord Pas de Calais already recognised that we faced a number of similar challenges

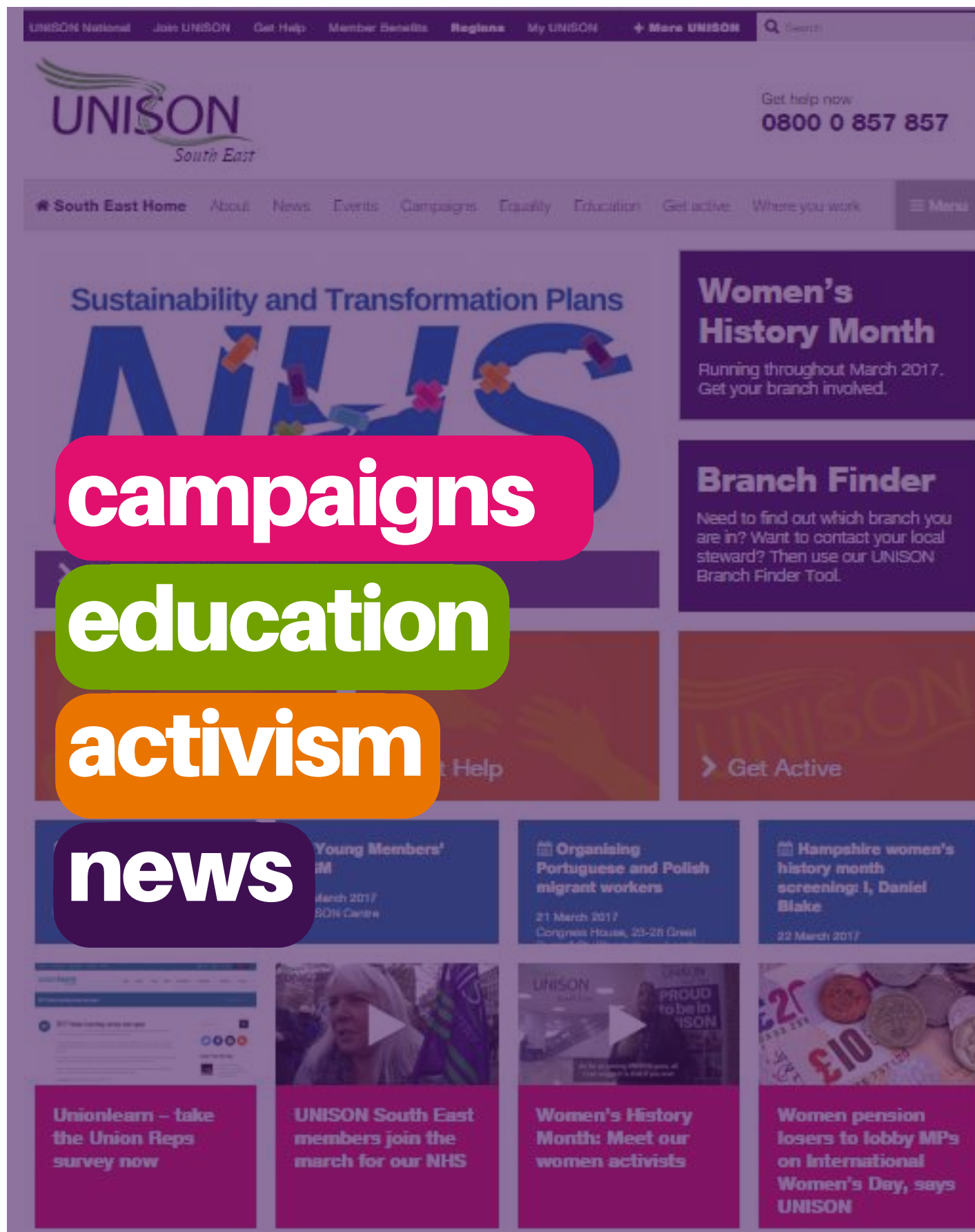


as a result of our governments’ so-called austerity policies which in practice resulted in the dismantling and privatisation of public services, particularly those on which the elderly and vulnerable depend. This included of course things like social care, transport and housing, the loss of which, allied with attacks on pensions and other benefits, resulted in ever deteriorating living standards for those least equipped to mount an effective protest. Our hope therefore was that by working together we would be able to build a stronger and more effective voice for retired people in our regions, and we believed that we have much to learn from each other. We also planned to explore how our respective unions organised their retired workers, looking at the benefits of each other’s democratic systems and structures and investigating how best to engage retired members and use their skills and knowledge for the benefit of all union members.

A copy of the full report from our visit is available from the SERMC to anyone who is interested, but in a nutshell the topics we covered included all of the above and more. We spent a full day with our CGT friends discussing these

issues, and were most impressed by the level to which retired members are involved within the union, the resources which are available to ensure that workers retain their union membership after retirement, and the commitment within the union to its retired members which ensures their issues are given equal importance to that of working members. The CGT are also very strong on combating the myth of the intergenerational divide and promote interaction between young and retired members so that they understand what they have in common, and realise that they only appear to be rivals for the same resources because of the government’s policy of starving public services of the funds they need to run efficiently. During our visit, we saw many examples of literature which promoted these views as well as some great cartoons and slogans, for example the one at the head of this article, “you’re never too old to be angry”, which comes, not surprisingly, from a recruitment leaflet for retired members.

In conclusion, we feel that continuing with this exchange can only be of benefit to both unions and their retired members. This is an exciting, ambitious and innovative project – something that has never been tried before – so we hope you will want to follow its progress and maybe even get involved. The project team would love to hear from you so please get in touch! There are many ways in which we can learn from and support each other and as trade union members, we are, after all, experts in solidarity, and we need that solidarity in these troubled times as never before.



www.unisonsoutheast.org.uk