

UNISON South East  
**Annual Report 2019**





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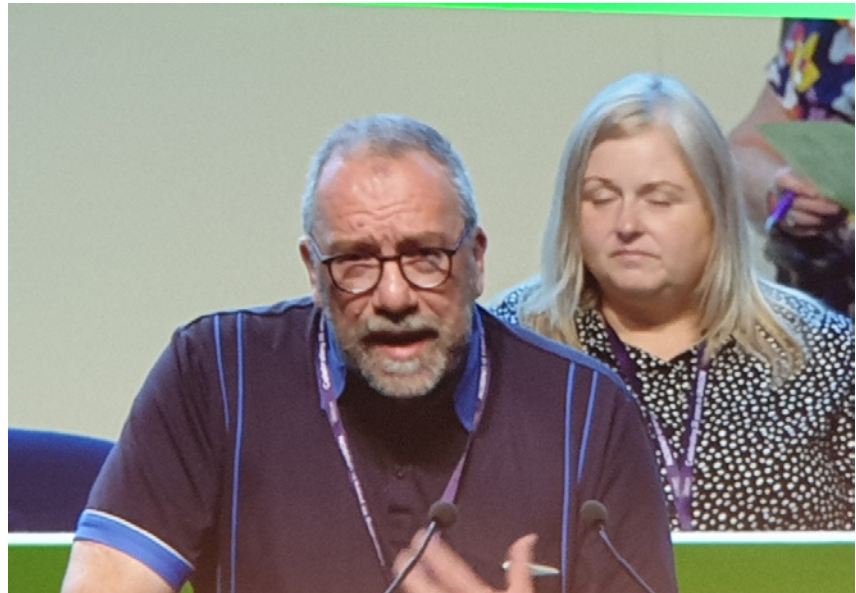
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## Regional Convenor - Mark Chiverton

***2019 was another exceptionally busy year for the South East Region. It was good to see so many members from Branches at the National Delegate Conference in Liverpool and also pleasing that the Regional delegate meetings and our social event were well attended. There were some excellent of speeches from our delegates, and it was pleasing that our motion on Housing received overwhelming support, from across the union. It is obviously sad that the main thrust of the motion will now be lost given the prospect of five more years of Tory misrule.***

A motion on the issue of Branch funding was overwhelmingly carried, which led to the establishment of a National Working Group designed to review all aspects of UNISON's expenditure, with a view to ensuring adequate resources for Branches. The working group has representation from all regions and a full report will be produced for the 2021 National Delegate Conference. Hopefully this work will lead to ensuring that branches have the funding they need, to deal with the increasing challenges faced.

Clearly the recent General Election result was a massive disappointment to the entire



labour movement, and a huge setback for the aspirations of the people we represent. The Labour Party set out a radical, positive manifesto, with a wide range of progressive policies, designed to rebuild our public services, restore workers rights and tackle the climate emergency. Despite retaining all our Labour seats in the South East, the election saw a significant swing towards the Tories in other parts of the country. This leaves us all facing the same kind of policies that have caused untold misery for millions of people, for five more years. The challenge now is for the entire labour movement to regroup in order to face the many challenges ahead. Whilst it is obviously important that there should be an honest and open debate

about the way forward, I believe it is essential that UNISON should continue to promote its own positive agenda for public services within the Labour Party.

2019 saw the Region continuing to have a good presence at Pride events and trade union festivals – as well as at the demonstrations held in September in support of the series of international school strikes highlighting the growing climate emergency. As usual the Region has run a number of training courses and seminars and the Regional Strategy Weekend was well received. We continue to raise key issues at a national level involving the Convenor team, NEC members and senior lay activists.



## Regional Convenor's Report (continued)

The Region has been very proud over recent months to support the Frimley Branch in its magnificent campaign against the proposal to transfer a large number of low paid staff to a wholly owned subsidiary. The overwhelming vote for strike action by UNISON members was instrumental in bringing the employers back to the table, and there has been a marked increase in Branch membership. The other unions have now signed up for joint talks and we hope for

a successful resolution to the dispute.

The unexpected loss of Lorna Mooney in July was obviously a tragedy for the Region and we continue to miss her contribution to our work. Despite this setback, the work of the Region has continued positively and I would like to thank all UNISON activists for their ongoing support and friendship. Billie Reynolds has been very supportive as Deputy Convenor which

is appreciated. I have also welcomed the ongoing support and advice given by Committee Chairs, NEC members and all those who have served on regional committees and groups.

Finally, many thanks to Steve Torrance and all of the SE Region staff for their guidance, advice and support. I am sure that 2020 will see us continuing to work jointly in a spirit of mutual respect and partnership.



## Regional Secretary report – Steve Torrance

Well, it's been quite a year!

We started the year with one bad Tory Prime Minister and we've finished it with another even worse one! Despite encouraging results for Labour in local elections in our region, we ended the year with the biggest Labour defeat since 1935. We have had another year of economic uncertainty and stagnation over Brexit, with extension after extension. However, it is now certain that that we are leaving the EU at the end of January. This certainty however does not extend to workers and environmental rights as those will not be protected post Brexit and we have yet to secure a trade deal with Europe, our largest trading partner.

We've seen school children around the world, inspired by Greta Thunberg, organise themselves to take collective strike action in schools and colleges up and down the country against climate change. Their actions have ensured that the environment has become the number one issue. The climate change clock really is ticking, it's clear that urgent action is needed and now.

South East delegates had a fantastic week in Liverpool for this 2019's National Delegate Conference. It was great to catch up with activists from around the region, and to hear

some of delegates speaking with such passion from the rostrum, including some first time delegates. Mark moved our Housing composited motion which was carried.

Sadly we also mourned the sudden and unexpected death of Lorna Mooney our Deputy Regional Convenor, in July. I was pleased that so many of the UNISON family attended the funeral, including Dave Prentis, General Secretary and several Assistant General Secretaries, as well as many representatives from Lorna's own branch – Portsmouth City.

The region held another successful Strategy Weekend in September, with speakers including UNISON's President, Josie Bird and Roger McKenzie Assistant General Secretary. The awards ceremony, for the top recruiting and campaigning branches, was an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the great work across branches and service groups.

In Frimley Health, members at Frimley, Wexham Park and Heatherwood hospitals, fought against the back door privatisation of their roles at the NHS Trust. As winners of the 'Campaign of the Year' award at this year's Strategy Weekend, their ballot turnout and mandate for action was phenomenal, with 99% backing action, on a 75% turnout. This campaign has



led to the employer returning to negotiate alternatives with UNISON and other unions – living proof that organised and unionised workers can make a difference.

November saw our 'Go for growth' and our regional campaign, 'It takes one to know one' this resulted in a number of new activists being recruited. The prize draw winners are all new activists, who were identified through this initiative, great news.

Finally, in the South East we had our best year for recruitment in a decade! We now have 1,658 more members in the region than at 1 Jan 2019. We also have 50 more stewards than this time last year, and our best December on record for recruitment.



## Finance Committee

***This year the finance committee met and routinely monitored regional committee groups' expenditure. During the year they also undertook a comprehensive review of regions financial standing orders, including all lay member expenses forms and associated documentation to ensure compliance with national financial standing orders.***

The full details of the financial report income and expenditure are contained separately.

The budget setting exercise for year 2020 has been difficult and the committee took an 'in principle' decision that budgets should more accurately reflect spending as oppose to previous years where budgets we agreed that well exceeded the regions income, on the basis that many budgets went under spent.

The total budget bids from committees across the region were just

over **£240k**, compared to projected income of **£171k**. With a deficit of approx **-£70k** it was therefore necessary to revisit all budget bids.

We reviewed each Committee's budget bid objectively against what had been spent in previous years and established a realistic budget level which still accommodates committee / group needs. This was not an expenditure cutting exercise as overall our expenditure is within budget (Total expenditure in 2018 was £145k). We do, however, think that it is important to start to realign the total budget bids to come within our overall resources and that budget bids accurately reflect overall activity.

With this in mind the total budgets agreed for 2020 by the Finance committee across all lay member groups was £212k.

The Finance Committee also reminded committees and groups that they are able to

make fresh submissions to the Finance Committee midyear, for a project or piece of work that was not in the original bid for their consideration.

The Co Chairs, Steve Milford and Diana Leach, authorised expenditure towards the Regional strategy of developing activists by agreeing funding for the Prizes for Recruitment of activists during November of £875 in total.

Additionally the Co Chairs expressed support, including financial, if necessary for the Frimley hospitals dispute by additional monies upon request from the Regional hardship fund. This was not required as the dispute has been postponed following movement by the employer.

All in all we ended 2019 in good financial shape for the challenges that undoubtedly lie ahead. Finally the Co Chairs wished to thank all finance committee members for their support throughout the year.



Lorna  
Mooney  
2019

## Education, Training and Development Committee



The ETD Committee met on 2 April, 27 June and 24 September in 2019 as it moved its meeting schedule away from the Regional Council AGM and meets again on 18 January 2020. Training and education, recruitment and branch organisation are standing items, with the Organising Framework and Regional Health check

considered at two meetings each year.

### **Activist training and education**

The Committee reviewed the activist education programme and participation at every meeting and worked with the Regional Education Organiser Sam Raymond to produce

the programme for 2020. This was informed by a detailed member survey on enabling access to trade union learning organised by Lorna Mooney, the results of which were considered by the Committee in June. Text messaging was introduced in April to improve attendance rates.

**In 2019 core training course completion was as below and overleaf...**

### **ERA Stewards trained January – December 2019**

220	Organising Stewards part 2 confirmed completed
9	Organising Stewards part 2 awaiting register to confirm completion
16	Booked on Organising Stewards part 2 in Nov/Dec
245	Expected number of stewards trained having completed parts 1 and 2

## Education, Training and Development Committee (continued)

### Stewards completing part 1 Organising Stewards but not Part 2 in 2019

40	Organising Stewards part 1- confirmed completed
5	Organising Stewards part 1 awaiting register to confirm completion
45	Expected number of stewards completing part 1

### On-Line Stewards Trained January – December 2019

14	Online stewards
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### Stewards completing ERA Re-accreditation January – December 2019

159	Stewards confirmed completing re-accreditation courses
42	Number of stewards trained plus stewards registered to attend re-accreditation courses in the last quarter of 2019.

### H&S Representatives trained January – December 2019

51	H&S Reps completed
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The number of courses cancelled further reduced in 2019; where there was low registration, arrangements were made to reschedule to new dates. Branches have been encouraged and supported to arrange additional branch based local courses. Details can be found here. <https://southeast.unison.org.uk/education/> During 2019, the Regions member learning provision has continued to grow supported by regional staff.

Unfortunately due to low registration the Branch Education Co-ordinators Network day had to be postponed and rearranged

and then cancelled as registration remained very low on the new date too.

The new Trained and Active Plan – Developing and Supporting Reps was considered in April and sent to all activists and staff to help ensure consistent support and mentoring arrangements are in place.

At their June meeting the Committee agreed to increase course fees in 2020 to £25 per day for non-residential courses and £125 for residential courses. This was subsequently endorsed by the Regional Committee.

### Recruitment

Reports for all branches are considered including steward numbers and measures to support branches at each meeting. Detailed reports on recruitment by gender were also considered in April and September. The Committee identified themes to be used for the regions recruitment weeks in 2019, which have been very successful in finding new activists as well as recruiting new members, with an increase of 1,525 members and 52 stewards as at 17 December. The 'It takes one to know one' campaign in November was particularly



successful in recruiting new activists.

### Branch organisation

In 2017 the Committee established criteria to determine whether branches are viable; this work was reviewed and refined at the June Committee meeting, with 2 new criteria added; consistent recruitment activity being undertaken and at least one ERA accredited steward undertaking representation of members. The criteria are being used with branches of less than 100 members during the 2019/20 Organising Framework discussions.

This led to the merger of Swale and Maidstone which is due to take place on 1 January 2020 and the merger of Woking, Mole Valley and Surrey Heath on 1 July 2019.

### Branch Rules

Work continued to establish consistent guidance to be followed by all branches throughout the year. The Regional Committee considered this in July and asked the ETD Committee to undertake some further work, which it did and agreed at its September meeting that the guidance must be followed rather than being optional to ensure consistency of rules across the regions 112 branches. The January 2020 Committee

meeting will consider a final draft to go to the Regional Council AGM for approval. The guidance includes best practice to include on branch committee decision making by email/post and sub branch sectional organisation and minimum quorum sizes for general meetings as below.

- For branches with up to 500 members, a quorum of 7% or 15 members whichever is the higher
- For branches with between 501 and 2,000 members, a quorum of 4% or 35 members whichever is the higher.
- For branches with over 2,000 members a quorum of 80 members.

### Regional Healthcheck

The Regional Healthcheck is now in its fifth year and has been used to identify both good performance in branches and to identify where improvements are required. The Healthcheck is produced and considered twice a year. The September meeting agreed revisions to address concerns that some measures unfairly favoured larger branches as well as some statistical information no longer being available. New measures were also added include having a budget on OLBA and membership growth, rather than recruitment, with that measure scoring more highly.



## Publicity and Campaigning Committee

*The Committee met six times in 2019. Five scheduled meetings on 15 March, 8 June, 1 August, 9 September and 7 December and an additional meeting on 30 March as the 15 March meeting had not been quorate.*

### Regional Pool

The Region received £84,482 funding to the Pool in 2019 to finance organising and recruitment activity; examples include:

- Recruitment materials and incentive schemes
- Campaign materials
- Stalls at events
- Temporary staff to carry out recruitment and organising projects (see protocol for engaging staff via regional pool funds)
- Publicity materials

The following ten bids with a total value of £145,689 were agreed by the Committee:

- £21,203 Surrey County for a schools organiser/recruiter
- £1,000 Bucks Area for stress workshops and Stars in our Schools
- £17,851 Health Committee for student recruitment and organisation
- £2,500 Isle of Wight Health for recruitment activity



- £31,121 Milton Keynes Area for a part time organiser/caseworker
- £3,014 Medway Town for recruitment activities
- £15,005 Kent Local Government for recruitment, training and activist development
- £250 Central & East Berks for a Council at work and play day
- £24,280 Frimley Health for an organiser/campaign worker
- £29,465 Western and Central Sussex Hospitals for an organiser/caseworker

For all agreed bids, the Committee require quarterly monitoring reports to be completed to ensure accountability, learn lessons from activity undertaken

and to be able to share and publicise benefits achieved on behalf of our members.

### Campaign Fund

Bids of £14,406 for 2019 Prides and £3,900 for a housing seminar submitted by the Committee were agreed by the National Campaign Fund.

The December meeting agreed a bid to go to the National Committee in January for £11,894 to support Prides in Oxford, Guildford, Southampton and Reading in 2020.

Two bids from Adur & Worthing to support campaign activity were also agreed. One opposing changes to recycling for £4,024, the other to oppose the outsourcing of theatres and museum for £2,268.

### Regional Outreach Fund

£500 each to support attendance at the Stand



Up to Racism March and Demonstration on 16 March 2019 was agreed for 2 branches and £500 was also agreed for one branch to support attendance at Tolpuddle on 21 July 2019.

## Regional Organising Fund

With a balance of £112,586 at the start of 2019, the Committee considered how best to use the funding available to support branches and build organisation. It agreed to use £84,024 to help branches fund the cost of temporary Fighting Fund Local Organiser bids in 2019.

£12,000 was agreed to support recruitment weeks throughout 2019, which has enabled Organisers working with branches to promote UNISON at events across the Region.

£20,000 of funding to support digital recruitment and organising in 2019 agreed at the December 2018 meeting has enabled a significant increase in our direct member contact on campaigns during the year.

## Branch Resources Review

The 1 August Committee considered arrangements for 22 SE branches eligible to receive a financial uplift in 2019 and to review how additional funding agreed in 2018 had been used. Additional funding of £59,862.69 was agreed for 11 branches. The remaining 11 branches had no budget on OLBA, had not returned the necessary information,

or decided not to request additional funding.

## Editorial & Communications Committee

With only one member elected to this Committee in 2019 (after only two in 2018) the P&C Committee – following a discussion of the regional Objectives Group – agreed to incorporate the Ed & Comm committee's work with its own at the June P&C meeting. A separate section was then included on the agenda for Ed & Comms matters at all subsequent meetings.

The committee believes this arrangement has worked extremely well and as a result the December committee meeting agreed a series of proposed changes to the regional council constitution to go to the 2020 Regional Council AGM. If adopted, the changes would see the responsibilities of the Ed & Comms Committee formally incorporated into the P&C Committee.

During the debate over the rule change, P&C acknowledged and applauded the valuable work carried out by the region's Editorial and Communications Committee since the creation of the current South East Region. In particular, its input to and production of South East Campaigner, the production of daily regional briefings at National Delegate Conference, the evolution of regional digital websites and channels, engagement

with the national office's branch website project, and the encouragement and support provided to branch communications officers, have all helped to create a visible South East region identity.

In order to ensure that this valuable work continues, and give reassurance that the legacy of Ed & Comms will be protected, P&C agreed that if these rule changes are adopted by the AGM:

1. The Publicity and Campaigning Committee will include a dedicated time slot for Editorial and Communications business at each of its meetings
2. The Publicity and Campaigning Committee will ensure that South East member and activist digital, electronic and paper communications continue to be developed and distributed on a frequent basis
3. The Publicity and Campaigning Committee will ensure that National Delegate Conference regional news sheets continue to be produced
4. The Publicity and Campaigning Committee will work in cooperation with the Education, Training and Development Committee to ensure that appropriate training and support continues to be made available to branch and regional group communication officers.

## Health & Safety Committee

***The Committee held four meetings during 2019, in April, July, September and November. In addition to the scheduled meetings the Committee held a seminar on November 27<sup>th</sup> at UNISON head office in Euston. We covered Asbestos, related injuries, illnesses and claims, Family Friendly Policies and a National update on Health and Safety.***

The morning included a talk on What Asbestos Is from Neil Jones, an update from Jackie Wood from Thompsons on Asbestos Claims. Vicki Gibbs SE Region Equalities Officer gave an interactive talk on Family Friendly Policies – At



lunch the delegates had the chance to chat and share ideas and Robert Baughan followed with the National Picture around Health and Safety and the work he and

the team had been covering this year. We also had an introduction from Steve Torrance, Regional Secretary. 17 H&S reps attended the event.

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## International Relations Committee

***The Committee continues to support all international movements and the South East Region affiliate to many campaigns to ensure our international support continues. As you will be aware, the rise of the far right over the last year around the globe is a cause for great concern.***

Over the last year, committee members and BIROs in the region have attended and participated in the following conferences/events:-

The **UNISON National International Relations Conference** was held at the University of Warwickshire in March. There were many great speakers and included a showing of Nae Pasaran - two of the original workers from the Rolls Royce Factory from East Kilbride were at the Conference and were applauded for the part they played in the downfall of Pinochet.

At **NDC in June**, the region spoke in favour of the Cuba

60 composite and Yve White spoke at a fringe meeting hosted by Cuba Solidarity Campaign to share her experiences during the UNISON delegation to Cuba in November/December 2018.

The Region also had good attendance at the **Eastern/ South East Region joint seminar** which took place in September at the UNISON Centre. We heard from Nick Crook, National International Relations Officer, who reminded us



of the priorities set by the NEC for international work. These included business and human rights within the global supply chains, the defence of trade unionists around the world - particularly within Turkey, Brazil, Colombia, Zimbabwe and particularly at the garment industry in Bangladesh. UNISON will also be working with international unions in West Africa around the Ebola crisis.

There were speakers from the following campaigns:-

- Justice for Colombia
- Cuba Solidarity Campaign
- Venezuela Solidarity

### Campaign

- Brazil Solidarity Initiative
- Palestine Solidarity Campaign

The Conference also heard from Stephen Lerner, an American labour and community organiser, who spoke about the rise of the far right across the globe.

There was a presentation from Extinction Rebellion to end the Conference.

In November 2019, the **Unions for Cuba** event organised by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign took place. This event provided

the opportunity for all the unions to show their continuing solidarity and support to Cuba. There were many speakers, including Maggie Ferncombe, Regional Secretary for the London Region. It was a fantastic day with some excellent networking and interesting speakers and workshops.

The Committee's last meeting of 2019 was due to take place on 12 December; which has been rearranged to a new date in January 2020. The Committee welcomes all new members.

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## Welfare Committee

***In 2019, the committee met twice a year once in January and then in July. In addition to this Welfare Training Weekend was also held at Eastbourne Centre in October 2019.***

The Training Weekend was fully booked with 20 delegates in attendance. Howard Wardle from Trussell Trust - CEO of Eastbourne Foodbank lead discussions on Food Poverty. Another speaker Jane Clack from Pay Plan, Money Advice Consultant gave useful information about Debt Solutions, also covering the topics on Vulnerability and Domestic Abuse.

Also discussions took place about further thoughts and ideas to help Branch Welfare

Officers undertake their role efficiently, including Quiz questionnaire, surveys etc.

UNISON There for you Case Worker from National office also provided some very handy and interesting information on handling cases.

Welfare UNISON promotional items were supplied to branches organising Welfare Themed events or relevant



recruitment activities. Promotional items included Charity Boxes, Pens, Note Books, Stress Balls etc

The Committee would like to thank UNISON staff members Kelly Hannah-Rogers, Heather Haley and Rowena Perry for their work with Committee in 2019.

## Regional Equality Action Group

***The South East Region remains passionately committed to ensuring that Equalities is at the heart of all of the union's activities and is not sidelined or siloed.***

This is demonstrated through the Region's continued approach to equalities as not only 'SOG' based activities but as something that should be embedded within all activities and that it is the responsibility of everyone. This approach has led to the Region leading the way in UNISON on a number of initiatives, for example the Equalities Toolkit, equalities training modules, equalities themed lunch and learns, and the annual equalities conference.

2019 kicked off with a motion on a cross-SOG campaign on Mental Health Inequality which was passed at 2019 Regional Council AGM, this campaign continued through the year including a workshop at the Annual Equalities Conference. 2019 was also Year of the Young Worker, with all Service Groups and SOGs having dedicated workshops, discussions or activities focussed on understanding and recruiting young members. This has led to a revitalised Young Members Forum and identified key campaign topics to be taken forwards for 2020,

there remains more work to be done at branch level to continue with our aim to have a young member as a branch officer in every branch.

The Equalities Conference seeks to bring together anyone interested in Equalities and on issues that may not be based in any one 'SOG' whilst also prioritising key issues affecting groups of members. The 2019 conference was held on 30<sup>th</sup> April and was attended with speakers including Christina McAnea, AGS for Bargaining & Equalities, who spoke about the injustices suffered by many of our SOG members, highlighting particular issues faced by those in fragmented workplaces and the care sector. The workshops focussed on two important equality issues, Tackling Hate Crimes and Raising Awareness and Bargaining for Mental Health in the workplace. Plans for the 2020 conferences are underway and registration forms will be sent out shortly, please save the date – 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

The Regional Equality Action Group has continued to provide a forum for discussions on broad equalities issues and a direct link between the SOGs and the Regional Committee. Discussions at REAG have led to the updated Working Together

Guidelines and a requirement for all committees- regional or branch- to have a dedicated agenda item on Equalities. This will be monitored by REAG throughout 2020. It has also highlighted continued work necessary to improve our participation in our democratic structures and ensure that every member and activists take part in our union at every level.

It is vital that we continue to strive to ensure that we are representative of our membership, Proportionality and Participation reports throughout 2019 clearly demonstrate that despite continued steady improvements in proportionality, branch and regional structures overall remain unrepresentative of our membership, with Women and Black Members particularly underrepresented. For example, 38% of branches do not have a Women's Officer despite this being a rulebook requirement, 85% of branches do not have a Black Member's Officer, only 39% of branch chairs are women, only 8% of all activists are Black, and only one regional committee has over 75% of delegates as women. Work will continue in 2020 not only to improve monitoring of fair representation but also to give committees and branches the tools necessary to do so.



## Regional Black Members Committee



***The committee had a good 2019 holding four meetings and a very successful net working event over two days in September the focus being on Branch based Black members groups and how UNISON can empower and enable members to take part in branch based Black members groups and to raise participation at all levels of UNISON's lay structures by Black members.***

The regional Black members committee is focussing on assisting branches to recruit and organise Black

staff employed in providing public services into UNISON and branch based Black member's groups and then ensuring that their voice is heard.

The 2020 work programme will build on the success of 2019 again focussing on establishing branch based Black members groups, the committee now has a whatsapp group and this year the committee will be working with branches to establish new groups based on the successful format developed in Oxford by branches there where a cross service group approach has proven

successful in getting the group up and running.

If any branches are interested in forming a Black members group they can contact Rosita Ellis Chair of the group on [rositaellis@nhs.net](mailto:rositaellis@nhs.net) or Simon Bolton Regional Organiser on [s.bolton@unison.co.uk](mailto:s.bolton@unison.co.uk)

**'You have to wake the people up first, then you'll get action.'**

## Disabled Members Committee

**Chair:** Sarah Barwick

**Vice-Chairs:** Susan Parkinson and Abdul Rahman

Numbers of members self-identifying on RMS as 'disabled' has increased by 25% from 2018. This continues the positive trend of increasing numbers of members self-identifying as disabled on RMS and the Committee intends to produce a leaflet to encourage members to let us know (by updating My UNISON) if they have a disability.

Disabled Members' Training weekend took place in Eastbourne on 7-9 June. A number of new delegates participated in the training, plus quite a few from the regional disabled members' committee. Delegates took part in a workshop on hearing loss, delivered by Wendy Horton. This included a practical exercise where

participants were able to use hearing aids and experience using a hearing loop. The workshop highlighted a number of access concerns in meetings/training that would not be immediately apparent to those of us who are not hearing impaired, such as the interference of rustling papers, or whispered conversations. Deirdre Costigan, UNISON National Officer for Disability Equality, gave an update on the national workplan, and shared a presentation on reasonable adjustments that had been prepared to be delivered in branches to reps. Participants also learned about UNISON structures, motions and conferences, as well as drafting their own motions.

The National Disabled Members' Conference was 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> November in Brighton. Our regional representatives were Sarah Barwick from Kent

Branch and Paul Rickards from Southampton District

The Regional Disabled Members AGM took place on 5<sup>th</sup> December at UNISON Centre. Deirdre Costigan spoke about the findings from UNISON's recent Workplace Disability and Health Survey. The survey has shown that there is still a great need for organising around disability equality and the Disabled Members Committee will use the results of this survey to focus their work.

The Regional Disabled Members' Committee has produced Disabled Members' SOG A4 folders, which can be used for SOG events, please contact [l.whitney@unison.co.uk](mailto:l.whitney@unison.co.uk) if your Branch would like to request some for an event (please give as much time as possible for us to send you the folders).





## LGBT+ Committee

***The South East LGBT+ committee have had an active year. The group celebrated when conference unanimously back the rule change to add the + to their name, something that will make the group more inclusive.***

The committee continues to meet three times a year, the first meeting (AGM) took place in January and was well attended from branches across the region. It was agreed to adjust the committee cycle to ensure the AGM was held before National LGBT+ Conference, the AGM now takes place at our October meeting. Discussions were had around Prides, it was clear from all members they wished to continue to support smaller local Prides, as they sometimes lose out on sponsorship, which can impact on our members who identify as LGBT+ in more conservative areas feeling marginalised and unsupported. Being a main sponsor of the smaller Prides has ensured UNISON has been at the forefront of these events. The region secured funding from the National Campaign Fund to sponsor Oxford, Surrey, Southampton and Reading Pride and the committee sponsored Isle of Wight and Portsmouth.

Our second meeting took place in May, where lots of



members volunteered to help at Prides. We received support from local branches at each event; it was great to see so many members giving up their time to support us. Some of the most moving encounters at Prides were with young people just starting their careers; they were encouraged to see UNISON championing LGBT+ rights as part of greater equalities and workers rights agenda. Planning has started for 2020.

The third meeting took place in October; it was great to see an increase in members attending. The committee welcomed Graham Reed from Mermaids as a guest speaker. Graham spoke about the work Mermaids do to raise awareness about gender

nonconformity in children and young people among professionals and the general public. The draft constitution was taken to meeting and agreed by all.

The National LGBT+ Conference took place 15-17<sup>th</sup> November in Bournemouth. The committee sent two regional delegates who attended along with branches from across the region. The regional LGBT+ group were delighted to be awarded the 2019 LGBT+ regional recruitment award, for the work that they have been doing to support smaller pride events, but also with local LGBT+ community groups, a massive congratulations to all committee members and everyone who has supported the work of the committee.

## Regional Women's Committee

***The regional women's committee (RWC) year began with national women's conference in Liverpool, in February. Headline guest speaker was Rosena Allin-Khan, MP. The South East motion on mental health inequality was carried.***

It is great credit to the South East RWC for initiating the work on the menopause, following a presentation at the annual women's forum in Eastbourne. The menopause lunch and learn workshops continue to grow in popularity not just in the South East but throughout the union, following a menopause workshop delivered at national women's conference last year by the South East. In addition, UNISON Learning and Organising Services has recently developed a 2-day menopause workplace policy course which the South East will be piloting.

The number of branch

women's officers in the South East has increased to 68 as of 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019. This is a marked improvement, due in part to the rule amendment at National Delegate Conference last year for the role of branch women's officer to be made a Rule Book position. However, not all branch rules have been updated and the RWC will be encouraging and supporting all branches in recruiting new Women's Officers.

The Women's Forum took place from 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> September in Eastbourne, it was very well attended. Guest speakers included Jo Galloway, Regional Manager, Bex Bailey from Young Women's Trust, and Josie Irwin, UNISON National Women's Officer as well as others. The workshops at this year's Forum included the rise of hate crimes including misogyny; Introduction to meeting you MP and lobbying; the gendered nature of clothing and a workshop on increasing the participation of

young women members.

The RWC AGM took place on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> October at Ranger House, it was well attended and the majority of committee positions were filled, although there is one committee vacancy and nominations will be sought in the New Year. The AGM gave heartfelt thanks to the retiring Regional Women's Officer for her support and dedication.

The first meeting of the new committee cycle took place on 30<sup>th</sup> November, it was well attended and included discussions on the National Women's Conference 2020 in Bournemouth and Women's History Month in March. There will be a meeting for new delegates at Women's Conference and all branches are encouraged to participate in Women's History Month and celebrate International Women's Day.





## Retired Members Committee

***2019 was another active year for the Retired Members Committee. Committee members have been involved with their local National Pensioners Convention (NPC) groups in Wessex, Thames Valley and the wider South East Region group. Also, Committee members continued to play an active part in SERTUC's Pensioners Network.***

The committee have successfully involved themselves with various groups in the region, including Labour Link, Regional Council, Regional Committee, Disabled members and others.

The Retired Members pocket guide was updated for 2019. The pocket guide is on the UNISON SE website and hard copies are available at each of our UNISON offices. It can also be viewed and downloaded on our Retired Members page from the UNISON SE website at

<https://southeast.unison.org.uk/equality/retired-members/>

Our delegate attended the NPC Convention in Blackpool on June 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>. There were speakers on environmental changes, the divide between the rich and poor, the impact of funding changes to the TV licence for older people and on the problems that have affected the Windrush Generation. During the time at the Convention, further discussions were had with regards to housing, transport and social care which in many cases, continue to present difficulties for pensioners.

Our delegate represented the committee at National Delegate Conference in June and reported back on the various debates that were had and spoke on the motion concerning the housing crisis.

The National Retired Members Conference this year was held on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> October in

Southport with more than 400 delegates. The Committee submitted two motions on Universal Credit - the effect on pensioners in mixed aged couples and Senior Railcard travel restrictions. These were accepted onto the agenda and both were passed at Conference.

Our AGM was held in December with a new Committee elected for the next two years. Thanks were given to the outgoing committee for all their hard work over the previous two years. There was a presentation from UNISON Learning and Organising Services about the learning opportunities available to retired members, which was well received and reports from the Committee Members who attended the various other committees to which they are members of.

The committee looks forward to building on the work they have achieved into 2020.



Dave Prentis in Southampton

## Young Members



***The Young Members Forum has had an eventful year. Most notably, a motion was passed for young members to have their own conference instead of the traditional training weekend. Members were very enthusiastic about this and quickly began sharing ideas and planning workshops.***

In May, a new committee was elected at the Young Members' AGM. Tessa Kumbirai Ngwiringwiri was welcomed as the new chair. The first committee meeting was held on the 28<sup>th</sup> June. The Forum continued to grow over the year, with four new office holders elected.

The Young Members' housing campaign planned to host a panel on the crisis in the

private rented sector on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July, with speakers from across politics, academia, and the trade union movement all booked. Sadly, the "Nothing Going On But The Rent" seminar was postponed by the flooding at UNISON centre and then cancelled, as many speakers had to pull out because of the General Election.

In September, two of our members represented the Forum as speakers on Centrepoin's panel at Labour conference, to discuss living on zero hours contracts in the South East. The Young Members Forum also met in September to discuss preparations for the December AGM. Members have also been busy making plans for next year, including

holding a regional residential training weekend. They are keen to include Mental Health First Aid training on the agenda, as well as a session on UNISON's structure. Members also thought it would be helpful to have a session on how to write and debate a motion.

The AGM was provisionally set for Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December in UNISON Centre but was cancelled. It will be rebooked for March 2020. It would be really appreciated if branches could reach out to any young members they have and encourage them to attend – there are several vacancies on the committee and lots of good opportunities for new people to get involved!



## Business and Environment Committee

***The committee met at different locations to find out more about the branches represented in the service group. South East Energy hosted a meeting as did Southern Counties Water branch. The committee increased representation from the Women's Forum and the Disabled Members Committee.***

Southern Water continued to go through transformation. A customer service restructure of 220 posts saw jobs go to different locations. This transferred the majority of posts to Capita based primarily in Rotherham and a small number offshore. Many staff including UNISON stewards were made redundant due the change of location. UNISON ran a high profile media campaign to publicise that the Southern Water decision to move work had created local job losses.

A pension scheme consultation concluded at the end of the year. The company intend to close the defined benefit pension scheme that has 420 members and move to a new defined contribution scheme for all staff. There are 1770 staff already in a defined contribution scheme. Talks with the company could not achieve keeping the defined benefit scheme open but improvements have been made



in the new defined contribution scheme with increased employer contributions. Additionally negotiations extended the provision of independent financial advice to support staff.

Pay negotiations secured the rate of the London Living Wage £10.55 per hour.

South East Water proposed changes to working patterns for 120 staff in Distribution. UNISON organised workplace meetings and got a lot of feedback from staff who were very concerned about the impact of working more hours at the weekend. The collective approach recruited 30 new members. The company made some changes to the proposals and delayed implementation.

The company also made changes to Seniors jobs

in customer service which concluded with a number of staff taking voluntary redundancy.

Despite these changes Southern Counties Water branch did well on recruitment.

EDF pay negotiations started with an offer of an unconsolidated pay offer but following unions balloting and detailed negotiations the final pay settlement was a consolidated increase.

Balloting at the Environment Agency resulted in industrial action in 2019. The Agency imposed an average 1.3% cost of living increase. Unions took action short of a strike and asked members to not participate in voluntary rosters. Lengthy negotiations did achieve an increase to an average 2% for staff.

## Community Forum

### ***The UNISON South East Community Forum held its AGM on 23rd January 2018***

AGM election for positions:  
Community Forum –  
Co-chairs Kevin Jackson,  
Helen Couchman  
Regional Committee - Kevin  
Jackson, Helen Couchman –  
Co-chairs

Patrick Kenny was appointed  
the secretary of the UNISON

South East Community Forum  
in December 2018. The South  
East Community Forum AGM  
was held on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup>  
January 2019. The AGM will  
have elections for the Forum  
Chair and Vice Chairs. A  
constitution was agreed and  
adopted at the AGM.

An organising and  
Campaigning Plan was agreed  
for 2019, Unfortunately  
due to issues with forum

members having difficulties in  
getting facility time and work  
pressures no other meetings  
to place. A budget has been  
agreed and accepted for 2020  
this will allow for 3 meetings  
of the South East Community  
Forum within the Year and  
allows for both organising and  
campaigning in 2020. The  
2020 AGM will take place in  
Early February.



Strategy Weekend 2019



## Healthcare Committee

*The South East Regional Health committee held four meetings in 2019 and had briefings from the national health team on the NHS pay deal and pay progression, NHS interim people strategy, the NHS Race Equality scheme and recruiting and organising in NHS arms length bodies.*

2019 could be seen as the year that the penny dropped amongst all political parties that the NHS has been underfunded and cut and needs more funding over a number of years to enable it to meet the needs of the public in England, an indication of just how bad funding has got is that even the Tories now accept that more money will have to be found.

The focus of the Health committee in 2019 as in previous years and going forward is to provide a forum for health branches in the region to meet each other and discuss common problems as well as be briefed on live issues that will impact our members and if your branch is a health branch and is not sending a delegate to the meetings could I ask that at your next branch or branch committee meeting you discuss sending a rep so that your branch can get its voice heard and take part in the



committee as well as meeting other health activists from around the South East region.

2020 is set to be an interesting year with a new government with an 80 seat majority that has made various public sector spending commitments including £20.5 bn real terms increase for the NHS between 2019 – 2024 which is well short of the 2016 Brexit referendum campaign promise which amounted to £18.5 bn a year when we left the EU which will be on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020 that would be £74 bn over the same period if that promise is to be kept. (Don't hold your breath!)

As ever our challenge is to recruit and organise those working in health and also to raise participation of

members at all levels with UNISON's lay structures, this will take hard work by us all but we can do it as the result over the Frimley WOS ballot demonstrates. The challenge is to listen to our members and find ways with them of organisation that are effective and suit their needs and enable them to take part in the life of their UNION.

**No society can legitimately call itself civilized if a sick person is denied medical aid because of lack of means.**

## Higher Education Committee

***The South East Higher Education Committee met three times in 2019 and continued its work encouraging branches to prioritise recruitment and retention throughout the year. The role of Committee Secretary passed from Kieran Pearson to Neil Duncan-Jordan at the end of November.***

571 new members were recruited in the HE Service Group in 2019, resulting in a net increase of 131 members. Six of the region's nine HE branches grew their membership during the year and only two fell short of their annual recruitment target. There was also a small net increase in the number of stewards in the service group, up from 74 to 76.

Branches engaged proactively with the union's two 'Go For Growth' periods in March and November and organised a variety of events and initiatives to promote UNISON membership. The University

of Sussex, University of Surrey, and University of Kent branches had particular success in this regard, all growing their overall net memberships by over ten percent in 2019.

UNISON's national HE seminar took place in York from 6-7 November with a record 16 delegates from the South East making their way north to represent their branches. The event inevitably focussed on the aftermath of the national industrial action ballots over pay and changes to the USS pension scheme. Unfortunately, the 50% turnout threshold to take action over pay was not reached, although turnout in the South East was significantly better than the national average.

The majority of campaigning work in 2019 focused on these two industrial action ballots. Branches pulled out all the stops and worked hard to reach the 50% turnout required in these,

with considerable support from staff across the region. A detailed communications and campaigning plan was put together by the regional HE committee to deliver the maximum turnout possible. Key elements included the most well organised branches undertaking their own phone-banking activity. Targeted phone-banking then took place with regional support directed to increase participation in areas of low turnout in the consultative ballot. A large number of events, stalls, walk rounds, desk-drops and open meetings to build support for the campaigns took place at campuses across the region. A series of emails were sent to HE members in the region covered by the ballot reminding them to vote. Organisers further supported branch activity around the region including meeting staff at the start and end of the day at many universities, undertaking floor walks, and supporting member meetings throughout the ballot period.





## Local Government Committee



***The Committee has met 4 times in 2019, on 2 February, 11 April, 4 July and 10 October. On 15 June, it also organised and held a briefing for new conference delegates and a regional delegates meeting in advance of the National Local Government Service Group Conference in Liverpool. The Committee held its Spring Conference in London on 12<sup>th</sup> March and its Autumn Conference on 22-23<sup>rd</sup> November in Portsmouth.***

The committee was chaired by Maureen Cleator, with Serena Powis as Vice Chair, and supported by Jenny Mason as Secretary to the committee, Geoff Ellis as Regional Manager and Rob Bealey as admin support.

The committee has made regular consideration of a number of matters including but not limited to:

- The Regional Strategy;
- Member recruitment and branch structures;
- Year of the Young Worker
- National and local pay negotiations, including NJC Pay up Now campaign;
- Regional Further Education and Sixth Form issues;
- Social Care and Home Care including Sustainability and Transformation Plans / Accountable Care Systems;
- Housing costs

The Committee submitted two motions to Local Government Conference on social care cuts and housing costs, both of which were carried at Conference and will be taken up nationally.

The Committee organised an excellent training session on local government finance and

feedback was such that the Committee will look to run this again as a mop-up session in 2020 for those unable to attend in 2019.

Cuts to core funding by central government continued to be a challenge to branches facing service reductions locally. Such financial constraints have also led to the under-mining of support for the community and voluntary sector. Increased demand particularly in children's and adult care services was not matched by sufficient extra funding.

There is no doubt that our activists and members working in local government, whether directly employed or in arms lengths companies or those organisations providing services in local government face more challenges in the year ahead.

## Police and Justice Committee

***At time of writing, membership across the five branches within the Service Group has grown by 3.3%, with a net increase of 152. This is an improvement on 2018 recruitment figures, plus net growth in membership is almost double the level experienced last year. A Powerpoint presentation for use during recruitment opportunities was formulated by the Committee.***

The Committee's annual seminar included workshops on engaging with young members and the effects of the menopause. An update was received from the UNISON National Officer on the future structure of probation service and UNISON's response to the Government's promised increase in Police Officers, with no assurances given on corresponding increases in police staff.

The Ministry of Justice announced that it would be terminating all Community Rehabilitation Company

(CRC) contracts early, and in 2021 transferring all offender management work from the CRCs to the NPS, and re-tendering some responsibilities to the private and voluntary sectors. Earlier in the year Interserve went into administration with businesses and assets sold and incorporated into a new company called Interserve Group. This had implications for UNISON members employed by Hampshire and IOW CRC.

Hampshire & IOW CRC did however receive a pay increase and National Probation Service members accepted the NPS Pay Modernisation Offer. UNISON entered into dispute with Kent, Surrey and Sussex CRC, operated by private company Seetec, following imposition of their pay award.

Police staff membership within UNISON Hampshire & IOW and Sussex Police and Justice branches accepted revised national pay and shift allowance awards for 2018 (2%) and 2019 (2.5%). Surrey

Police implemented a 2% pay award on all grades and 2.5% increase on shift allowance for 2019-20. Kent Police introduced a pay award of 1% plus a 1% non-consolidated bonus for 2018/19 and an increase of 2.5% applied for 2019/20. For two years running Thames Valley Police introduced pay awards of between 2%-5.5%.

Custody centres, previously operated by private company Tascor Facilities Management, are due to be in-sourced back to Sussex Police. This welcome development follows the in-sourcing of Thames Valley Police custody services earlier this year.

UNISON supports the National Police Chief's Council Action Plan to tackle sexual harassment in policing and is hopeful that police workplace culture will change.

The Committee was saddened to hear of the passing of its former delegate, probation representative and Sussex Police and Justice Branch Chair, Nick Downs who will be missed.





## Labour Link Committee

*Another active year in terms of Committee attendance, Labour Link Branch Officer training and Local Campaigning. Pleasing that we now have Labour Link Officers in around half of the Branches in the Region and this has helped us to get a fuller picture of Labour support across the South East.*



Sadly, despite record NHS waiting lists, cuts in Local Govt services, the increased reliance on food-banks and the Climate Change emergency, Brexit has dominated the political agenda. Anti-European feelings hit the mainstream political parties in the European elections and led inexorably to the December General Election. Brexit was again top of the agenda and was a major factor in Labour's worst General Election defeat since the 1930's.

Within the SE we largely bucked the national trend and retained our 8 Parliamentary seats. UNISON concentrated its financial support in Portsmouth South and Canterbury, where we increased our majorities – excellent results for Stephen Morgan and Rosie Duffield, both UNISON members. We also retained our other seats in Oxford East, Reading East, Southampton Test, Slough, Hove and Brighton

Kemptown, with good majorities. Congratulations to all Labour Link activists and supporters who helped out in these and other campaigns – we enter 2020 with an encouraging Regional base.

There will be some Local Elections in May 2020 and the long fightback for Labour starts now. By spring we will have elected a new Party Leader and Deputy. At the January meeting of the National Labour Link Committee, UNISON voted to back Keir Starmer for Leader and Angela Rayner (a life-long UNISON activist) as Deputy Leader.

There will, inevitably, be a long analysis of why Labour lost and reflections on our future direction, but what will be critical for the union and the Party is that we unite behind the new Leadership team and start campaigning now. One feature of our election failure is that

support for Labour amongst public sector workers has fallen – whilst this is very disappointing, it does give us the opportunity to address the issues directly with our own members and rebuild support for Labour.

Thanks to Jean Butcher (Vice-chair), Ryan Slaughter, Cath Still and all of the Labour Link Committee members for your support and friendship during 2019 – a very hard year – and in anticipation of the political campaigns to come. In the words of Tony Benn – “Every Generation must fight the same battles again and again – there's no final victory and there's no final defeat”.

**Steve Milford,**  
Chair – UNISON Regional Labour Link Committee



# UNISON

*South East*



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