



**Join the People's Assembly Demonstration for Health, Homes, Jobs & Education, Saturday 16 April
(Assemble 1.00 PM, Gower Street, WC1 for march to Trafalgar Square)**

Concerned about the Council's new appraisal/PRP scheme? Check out advice on the branch website: camdenunison.org.uk/2016/03/29/unison-advice-on-the-new-appraisal-and-prp-scheme/

Newsletter of the Camden Unison Branch



www.camdenunison.org.uk

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Hands off our schools

In his 16 March Budget statement George Osborne announced that all maintained (community and voluntary) schools in England must become Academies no later than 2022. This would mark a huge step towards the wholesale privatisation of state-funded education since 39% of secondary and 61% of primary schools are still tied to local education authorities like Camden's, where there are only two Academies. With growing evidence that existing

Academies underperform and serious questions about financial oversight in current Academy chains, the government is dismissing the views of teachers, parents and students, and going far beyond the Conservative Party's own manifesto pledge. Under the proposal school buildings and land would become the property of largely unaccountable private organisations. Some unscrupulous chains have even removed vulnerable pupils in order to boost their league table rankings and

have raided budgets to pay grossly inflated salaries exceeding £200,000 to senior managers. As well as dismantling local education authorities that offer support and planning mechanisms, the mass academisation programme would threaten the teaching unions and UNISON, paving the way to attacks on the terms and conditions of teachers and support staff. Combined with the damaging changes to the school funding formula, these proposals, if

implemented, would result in bigger class sizes, a narrower curriculum, unqualified teachers and low-paid staff. Needless to say, disadvantaged children, especially those with special needs, would be hardest hit.

Our branch supported the call from the NUT teaching unions for a protest march on the Department for Education on 23 March. Meanwhile, the Easter conferences of the main teaching unions urgently need a coordinated response that in addition to community campaigning must inevitably mean national strike action to have a real chance of defeating this fundamental attack on comprehensive state education. Camden UNISON has taken these arguments to the NUT conference.

George Binette



Photo: Pete Ainsley

UNISON Banners in Trafalgar Square

20,000 demonstrated against racism and Islamophobia and said 'Refugees are welcome here' on the national Stand Up to Racism march through London on Saturday 19 March. It was double the size of the 2015 march: young, diverse, angry and political. There were sizeable groups of students and health workers. Fifty-eight trade union banners were on the march, including several from UNISON branches who grouped together for a collective photo in Trafalgar Square. National trade union leaders, comedians, and Shadow Cabinet member Dianne Abbott were amongst several speakers addressing the rally at the end. Three hundred also marched in Cardiff and 3000 in Glasgow and more across Europe. More at www.standuptoracism.org.uk *Liz Wheatley*

London's air: it's a killer

This year sees the 60th anniversary of the Clean Air Act. But an estimated 40,000 premature deaths a year still result from outdoor air pollution. The chief culprits are the gas nitrogen dioxide and diesel particulates. The informative Camden Council website gives 2010 figures for London and Camden as 9,416 and 264 premature deaths respectively. It also details actions the Council is taking. Across the UK 38 out of 43 zones are in breach of EU standards on nitrogen dioxide emission. London will not comply

until 2025 on the current timetable. Moreover the Observer newspaper reported that while Berlin has banned the most polluting diesel cars, in London they can be used until 2020. 300 Route master buses have also been exempted. Research at Kings College indicates central London roads having the highest nitrogen dioxide concentrations in the world with annual quotas already being exceeded this January. Doubts have been raised about the adequacy of the monitoring of air pollution.

There are a reported 130 such stations across London. A workshop speaker at the 'Climate Rising' conference argued for 1,000 in schools. Threats of EU fines and legal rulings from the EU and the UK's own Supreme Court that the government must produce a plan as soon as possible to comply with emission standards are apparently being ignored. Those most at risk are the very young and the elderly, those with health conditions such as asthma and the poor living near main roads. Government research estimates that the

health and environmental costs of air pollution amount to £20 billion. Globally, eliminating air pollution could reduce warming by a significant 0.6 degrees. There is sufficient knowledge as to what needs to be done. What is lacking is the political will. For information visit the Friends of the Earth website and search for 'air pollution briefing' (www.foe.co.uk). UNISON and other unions must give this issue an increased priority. Let's have some shouting: People are dying needlessly!

Pete Ainsley
Retired member

Climate Change: March backwards on 8 May!

Since its election last May the government has waged war on renewable energy. Onshore wind subsidies have been cut as well as solar funding. The Green Deal for home insulation has been scrapped as has the Zero Carbon Homes target. Instead we have planning changes to fast track fracking, new tax breaks for fossil fuels and a boost to road building. The agreement in Paris to aim to limit temperature rises to 2 degrees, preferably 1.5 was not a serious attempt to limit global warming. Their focus is on voluntary pledges rather than legally enforceable targets without pressure from below the rise will be a disastrous 3.5 degrees. A popular slogan is 'system change not climate change.' We now have to hold governments to their pledges and the temperature targets. To highlight the government back tracking on climate change there will be a march down Whitehall past Downing Street on 8 May. To make the point people will be marching backwards!! More information at www.campaigncc.org/ Actions are planned to take place along the route. It is meant to be a fun and imaginative protest to confront government lies on climate and their policies.

Pete Ainsley
Retired Member

Further education fights back

On Wednesday 24 February UNISON and UCU took joint strike action. There has been both mounting anger and despair at the 17% (£3,000) fall in the real value of salaries for support staff. Several college principals have had massive salary increases and are now receiving packages worth over £200,000 a year. The FE funding squeeze, combined with the Government's programme of 'area reviews', explicitly devised to shrink the sector into 'fewer more resilient and efficient' units has spurred a bout of 'merger mania' with City & Islington College (with its own UNISON branch) due to merge this summer with Westminster Kingsway, where Camden UNISON represents some 40 members. Senior management at Westminster Kingsway has quite openly said to union representatives, 'We've salami

sliced this college to the bone'. At the end of February, the largest teaching union, the NUT, announced that its members in Sixth Form colleges, which include City & Islington, had voted overwhelmingly for strike action in their own dispute over attacks on funding and so pay and conditions with a one-day stoppage set for Tuesday 15 March. There appeared to be the possibility that UCU and UNISON members would be joining their NUT colleagues, which could have laid the basis not just for a serious fight over real pay, but to highlight the

plight of this all too often forgotten sector. Unfortunately, the UCU FE committee voted against joining the NUT on 15 March and eventually supported the suspension of industrial action. While UNISON's FE body was prepared to back strikes in April, our FE membership isn't yet large or organised enough to stage national strike action in isolation. The conclusion is a very unhappy one, but with mergers taking place support staff have every reason to join UNISON and get organised.

George Binette

We are looking for writers and cartoonists. If you are interested and want to contribute your hidden talents to our newsletter. Please contact the UNISON branch office, Telephone: 020 7974 1633, camdenunison@gov.uk

Phoebe Watkins and Liz Wheatley report back on their visit to the refugee camp in Calais as part of Trade Unionists4Calais. Read their report below, and for further updates visit the Camden UNISON website.

Camden in Calais

The French authorities have forcibly evicted increasing numbers from the Calais 'jungle' and placing many of the camp's former residents in converted shipping containers! The jungle was torn down, burned and tear-gas fired at residents who were being forcibly moved to shipping containers.

Two of us joined forces with Trade Unionists-4Calais, in mid-February this year. A week-long trip organised primarily for teachers during half term to volunteer in the Calais 'jungle school' with adults and children. We arrived with 5 large boxes of *English for Speakers of Other Languages* (ESOL) books donated from London Further Education Colleges, and joined 40+ other trade

unionists to spend up to 10 days in Calais. The camp includes shops, medical facilities, legal advice, play areas, and places of worship. The Eritrean church had been burned down the week before by fascist thugs but already a new church was up, painted, and being used. We started at the Care4Calais warehouses - everyone could do something. A list of useful donations can be found on Care4Calais website.

We were able to speak to some young men from Afghanistan - most of whom had walked thousands of miles across the middle east, put their lives at risk across Europe, only to end up in this mud soaked rubbish tip, and harassed by the French police. Most of the people

living in this camp already have families living in the UK, but are denied access due to being over 18, and therefore responsible for themselves.

The numbers in the camp have been compared to the equivalent of 2 or 3 large secondary schools. With the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and others trying to wind up people's fears, it is useful to put this tragedy into proper perspective. Highly qualified people, fleeing war, poverty and death are seeking what we all would want - security, work and safety.

We will carry on supporting people seeking a better life in whatever way possible with money, and donations, and we encourage you to join the Stand up to Racism - Refugees are Welcome campaign.'

Sports workers win £8000 in holiday pay

Camden UNISON has won compensation of up to £8000 each for over 40 workers in sports development. The payments were for either zero hour contract workers, or permanent workers who did additional hours but did not receive corresponding holiday pay. We raised the case of these workers in June 2015, and following negotiations which were unfortunately subject to extended delays, reached agreement on compensation payments in June and

HR have now made the vast majority of these payments. Many of the zero hour contract workers have been moved onto permanent contracts as we previously reported, and we were also able to secure pay rises. We are now representing a smaller group of staff elsewhere in the Council in the same position.

We have also approached management to negotiate improved payment rates for additional hours, to avoid us having to make further compensation

claims in the future. Management have agreed to talks so we will keep members updated. We would also like to reiterate our advice, that if any of you are casual workers, or on zero hours contracts, or have worked regular additional hours or overtime, or have received regular enhancements (antisocial hours payments) join UNISON and contact John Shepherd (John.Shepherd@Camden.gov.uk) to take up your case and add you to our additional claim group.

April 2016

EYE VIEW

Government in crisis: Ramp up the resistance

The Tories' election victory in May 2015 was a surprise. Many pundits predicted a further decade of Tory rule.

But 11 months on this government is in deep trouble:

- The Tories are hopelessly split on the EU referendum. Ian Duncan Smith's resignation forced a U-turn on cuts to disability benefits, leaving a £4.4 billion hole in the budget
- Junior doctors are striking against the imposition of an 'unsafe and unfair' contract, and winning widespread public support
- Many Tory councillors have joined the opposition to the undemocratic diktat that all schools must become private academies, so abolishing local education authorities. The Housing Bill which will virtually abolish public housing faces bitter resistance
- Finally, there is the shocking prospect that Britain's steel production will have all but ceased by summer.

These destructive attacks rest on a simpleminded belief that all public spending is bad. The Tories' vision involves still more cuts to public services and their eventual wholesale privatisation. Given the widespread opposition they should be defeated. This will require serious and effective co-ordinated action by trade unions and community organisations. The NUT decision to coordinate strike action with the junior doctors is a small but welcome step. All of us need to build on it.

UNISON and young people fight cuts to youth services

On 29 January, dozens of staff and Camden young people demonstrated outside a full meeting of Camden's Labour Council, calling for the rethinking of devastating cuts to youth services. The council had previously approved a widespread cuts package, including massive £1.6 million cuts to youth services, which had already suffered £2.3 million of cuts in 2012. This would leave the service over 60% worse off in real terms than in 2011. The proposed cuts include: 64% cut in universal youth service provision closure of two youth centres closure of the COOL project funding activities for low income young people closure of the Under 25's Advice Centre 70% budget cut to Connexions careers and jobs support for young people further cuts to the youth offending service 25 to 30 full-time equivalent jobs lost Camden UNISON responded by launching a campaign, Save Camden Youth Services, aimed at fighting the cuts, involving workers and the community. Four local young

people led the campaign deputation to the Council, and argued passionately and effectively against the cuts. So effectively in fact that, Council managers switched off the cameras so that their deputation was not recorded! The Council are due to make a final decision on whether or not to approve the changes on 6 April, when we will be holding another demonstration outside the Town Hall, so please join us on this date at 6 PM. In the meantime we are asking people to sign our online petition at chn.ge/1TFRzHv and Like the campaign Facebook page: Save Camden Youth Services. For more information, including a great short video about the campaign, see our website at: camdenunison.org.uk/tag/youth

John Shepherd



London living wage for care home staff

Nearly three years after Camden UNISON first raised the demand, the Council has finally reached agreement with Shaw Healthcare that will ensure that the London Living Wage (LLW currently £9.40 an hour) will be the minimum hourly rate at the Shaw-run homes at Maitland Park and Wellesley Road. The agreement, announced at a full Council meeting on 25 January, won't take effect until this July, but is undoubtedly a major step forward.

Development

Domestic staff at the two homes have been on the National Minimum Wage, £6.70, and care workers supporting people with often advanced dementia were getting just £7.57 an hour. Camden had entered into a PFI-style contract with Shaw Healthcare in 2010, which meant that the

firm would operate two homes on behalf of the Council until 2040-41 on the basis of its capital investment in the development of the new facilities. The contract did not stipulate the LLW and it soon became clear that Shaw had no intention of having ex-Camden staff remaining on their previous Council pay and conditions. Instead, the company offered buy-out payments as part compensation for swingeing salary cuts. The first group of some 50 workers transferred from Camden's employment to Shaw's Maitland Park home in June 2013. Within 18 months more than 40% had left for one reason or another. There has also been high turnover of staff following the transfer from the two remaining Camden-run care homes to Shaw in June last year. Unfortunately for some staff, the move to LLW comes as too

little too late. During the course of 2015, the UNISON branch began to mount a campaign around the issue with care workers joint lobby with Caterlink-employed school meals staff at a lobby of a full Council meeting on 2 March and putting forward a second deputation to the Council last June. The newly elected Cabinet member for Health & Adult Social Care, Cllr Sally Gimson, was prepared not only to listen to our arguments, but also to act to secure movement after prolonged frustration.

Meanwhile

Though the branch continues to believe that social care should be provided by directly employed public sector workers, rather than by a for profit company, the modest success in securing the LLW for care home staff will make some difference in alleviating the reality of poverty for many of those workers charged with caring for some of the most vulnerable in society. Meanwhile, the branch will go on working to ensure that the national union's Ethical Care Charter for homecare staff also become a reality for residential care workers.

George Binette

To keep informed join us on social media including Facebook: facebook.com/camdenunison, Twitter: @camdenunison, and our groups on Yammer. Search Camden UNISON, Camden Black Workers Group, Women Workers Group, Disabled Workers and Rainbow Camden (LGBT group)

Ongoing pay dispute

The sorry conclusion of the 2014 dispute, which failed to halt the erosion of real pay for most local government workers, provoked a new unprecedented level of discontent among UNISON activists in local government, which translated into a successful call from 55 branches (including our own), representing more than 25% of the union's total local government membership for a special one-day conference that took place in London last March. This was only the second such conference in UNISON's 23-year history and our branch has two motions on the agenda, both of which passed overwhelmingly. Indeed, the day as a whole was not easy listening for the union's leadership. The conference has finally resulted in some changes in how the union consults members and how de-

isions are reached about suspending industrial action after the 2014 debacle.

UNISON and the other recognised unions within the NJC (the GMB and Unite) lodged a very similar claim for 2016-17 to 2014's, calling for a typical £1 an hour increase. All too predictably, the NJC employers in the Local Government Association rejected this out of hand and eventually tabled a supposedly 'best and final' two-year offer in early December 2015, which offered relatively large increases to the very lowest paid in order to put hourly pay above the rate of George Osborne's so-called National Living Wage of £7.20 an hour, while offering the vast majority of the workforce just 1% from April this year and the same in April 2017. Since most of us are in the Local Government Pension

Scheme (LGPS) the 1% amounts to still another real pay cut, regardless of the current rate of inflation since we lose the relief (1.4%) on National Insurance contributions previously allowed in exchange for our LGPS deductions.

Last month UNISON conducted a consultation exercise in response to the employers' offer among members working in councils across England, Wales and the Northern Ireland region. Our union's NJC committee had recommended rejection and 64% of those voting found the proposal unacceptable. Ten of the 11 regions covered by the consultation rejected the offer. In Camden more than 400 members voted and 83% of those said 'no' to the offer, with a clear majority also in favour of strike action. Since then Unite members have also rejected

the offer, but nationally GMB members voted to accept after the union's leadership put the offer forward without any recommendation. The GMB has not been prepared to enter into talks with Unite and UNISON to push for an improved offer and is simply calling for implementation of the employers' December proposal.

At the time of writing it is uncertain whether an official strike ballot will go ahead, but if it does then we must seize the unusual opportunity to recruit to the union that is posed when UNISON is seen to be leading the fight for members' basic interests. As a branch we must also seek to ensure that any national campaign doesn't repeat the errors of 2014 and shows from the outset a commitment to a strategy of escalating action from the outset.

George Binette

Service Group Elections: Use Your Vote!

Elections for seats on your union's Service Group Executive for Local Government started on Monday 11 April and run until Friday 20 May. The Service Group Executive (or SGE) is elected every two years and has responsibility for deciding policy on important questions impacting members across councils in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland between annual conferences and for implementing policies adopted by the Local Government conference each June. Your branch committee has nominated the following candidates:

■ **John McLoughlin**, an incumbent member of the Executive and secretary of the Tower Hamlets branch

■ **Sue Plain**, also an incumbent Executive member and the secretary of the Southwark branch, and

■ **Caroline Firmin**, who is standing for the low-paid women's seat and is a home carer in Southwark. She has been centrally involved in getting Southwark Council to sign up to UNISON's Ethical Care Charter.

Ballot papers should go to members' home addresses. If you've not received a ballot paper by Tuesday 19 April, then please contact the ballot helpline through UNISONdirect on 0800 0857 857. Unfortunately, turnout in these important elections is often very low, so your individual vote could make a real difference to the outcome.

The junior doctors' fight is our fight

The Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has imposed a new contract on junior doctors, coming into force 1 August 2016. This contract will not only rip up the terms and conditions for junior doctors, but will open the door for the same to happen to other sections of the NHS and wider public sector. Jeremy Hunt has insisted that the NHS needs more doctors working weekends, but isn't prepared to fund it. The fact is junior doc-

tors are already working weekends. He also wants to rule that working into the evening and weekends is not anti-social, and to therefore remove the additional payments. So the end result is existing junior doctors will work more hours for less money. The health service is likely to become a less safe place for us to use and staff to work in.

The day after Hunt announced the imposition of the contract, hundreds of junior doctors marched on

Whitehall, and they have since fixed three strikes, each of 48 hours, the next being 6 April and 26 April. By imposing the contract, Hunt has issued a threat to all trade unionists – if the Tories can get away with doing it in the NHS then they'll try to do it in other workplaces. So the junior doctors' fight is a fight for us all. It's a fight to defend the NHS, a service that we all rely on. Junior doctors are already stretched, so making them work across a seven day

rota will take them to breaking point. This contract is really about preparing the NHS for privatisation by breaking up the conditions people work in and the service they provide. There have been picket lines at the hospitals in Camden, and rallies at UCLH on the Euston Road, so keep checking on the Camden UNISON website for details of where to join the junior doctors during their strikes in April.

Liz Wheatley

LGBT success

Camden Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Workers Group celebrated LGBT Month in February for the first time. The group has been re-energized since moving into 5 Pancras Square. We are an informal group but action based. In the last 18 months we have worked with HR to update questions asked about gender, raised issues about cuts to sexual health provision, submitted comments about Camden Council's local plan, and to help prevent closures of even more spaces important to our community. As it was our first LGBT month we asked people what they're passionate about. Over the month we had communications across the council, ran three sessions and our monthly meeting. I ran a session (with The Albert Kennedy Trust) about Trans

Awareness. The session was full (a lot of front line staff attended) with everyone learning about how we can best serve our Trans residents. We also had a well-attended event with author Jonathan Kemp at the Kentish Town Library and a session run by two LGBT group members about Diverse Families on how to run inclusive services.

Nearly 70 people attend our events, over 200 people replied to a question on Essentials, and the group was mentioned in the Chief Executives blog. The Group is open to any member who self-identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary and questioning. If you would like to attend one of our meetings, have any questions or comments; please contact us at LGBTSoG@camden.gov.uk

Dalia Fleming

Who needs Trident?

George Osbornes budget promises massive cuts to public services. The same is not true about plans to replace Trident nuclear missile systems at a cost between £30bn to £100bn. This could pay for many schools, hospitals, and nurses. In 1968 the UK signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and solemnly promised never to use nuclear weapons against a country that did not possess them. Those who urge replacement say it is for our security and stand-

ing in the world. However, many say Trident is an expensive and outdated weapon system and not relevant.

Far from being independent the Americans maintain control of Trident's guidance systems. Remember also the UK has bought 2 new aircraft carriers without any aircraft to fly from them. An entire fleet of Type 45 destroyers sits at quayside in Plymouth with engine problems. This is meant to be an age of austerity!

Sean Breslin

Unwell or disabled: don't just leave

Sometimes workers who have become ill or disabled are tempted to resign or retire, however you should not do this before talking to your Unison rep: as recent two cases in CSF show where members nearly missed out on tens of thousands of pounds of benefits. In 2015 two members contacted me for advice about leaving. One had a query about retirement which had been agreed and the other a query about resignation and notice periods. Exploring the reasons for why they were leaving, I discovered that both felt they had to go due to their poor health. I therefore advised one member to

withdraw their retirement request, and the other not to resign. Instead I advised both to seek referrals to occupational health (OH). In some cases we can help members get reasonable adjustments agreed to change their duties or move into different job roles so disabled or ill staff can remain at work. In these cases this was unfortunately not possible, however with support from Unison both of these members were recommended by OH for ill-health early retirement on the highest tier. Depending on age, ill-health early retirement pays out a pension on an enhanced basis,

compared with normal retirement. So in both of these cases the members ended up tens of thousands of pounds better off. So if you feel you cannot continue in your current job because of your health, don't despair, discuss it with your union rep first as you may have other options. These cases also demonstrate the importance of being part of the pension scheme. Only members of the LGPS can qualify for ill-health early retirement, so if you have opted out it is worth considering opting back in, because you never know what the future will hold.

John Shepherd



Kill the Housing Bill

Tenants, trade unionists and councillors from Camden marched together through central London with thousands of other people against the government's draconian Housing and Planning Bill. The Bill will end permanent tenancies, force many tenants to pay market rents and would force the council to sell off properties.

Liz Wheatley

Why I celebrate International Women's Day

I remember my first proper job interview very clearly. I had just finished my A level exams in Maths and Sciences, unemployment had reached 2 million and Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister. I had applied for an entry level position with a computer firm. I went along knowing that I was more than qualified for the job - full of confidence and hope.

I was met by two men in suits. After looking at my application, the interview took an unexpected turn. 'You're a young woman, and we don't have any young women working here - how would you handle your male colleagues?' I was asked. 'And there's shift work - you'd be here late at night. What would you do if someone made an advance?' 'How would you get home after your shift? Do you have a boyfriend?' I left that interview feeling as if someone had poured a bucket of cold sick over me. I knew that what had happened was wrong but I was too young and inexperienced to know what I could possibly do about it.

Factory

I'm sure those two men considered that they were doing the right thing and 'protecting my interests' by rejecting me for that job. I picked myself up and managed to find a job in a local factory making printed circuit boards for computers as a 'pro-



Sandra Soteriou, Louise Trewavas and Olivia Vincenti

cess control' technician, analysing all the chemical solutions for the plating process and keeping them within the acceptable range. I spent a lot of time roaming the factory floor, got on well with everyone in the company and made many friends.

My rights

After a few months, the company took on a lab assistant and I trained him in all the processes. We became good friends, and when he mentioned in conversation that he was actually paid more than me I was completely stunned. I knew that I was a good worker, I was on favourable terms with all the managers, but clearly the company felt that they could pay women less. It wasn't personal - that's just how it was. This time, I knew more about my rights, and I went to the Equal Opportunities Commission - they got me a young lawyer called Harriet Harman. I needed to carefully gather evidence to

build my case for equal pay, and I would have struggled to do this without the help and cooperation of the man I was claiming parity with. When I looked around the factory I realised that most of the women there were working in different jobs than men - so they were being 'legitimately' paid less. The Equal Pay Act of that time wouldn't help them. I could only advise them that they should join a union to try to get some justice - what other chance did they have?

Teenager

I won my claim for equal pay, but at a price. I was escorted off the factory premises and told to stay away while they continued to pay my wages. I was still a teenager. It was the fastest growing up experience of my life. But it wasn't personal. That's just how employers can behave if they're allowed to get away with it.

Louise Trewavas

All together at 5 Pancras Square

Tuesday 8th March 2016: the third floor of 5 Pancras Square is awash with pink and purple fairy lights. There are tissue paper pom-poms adorning the tops of lockers and cupboards, and one of the kitchens has been filled with snacks, fruit and goodies that colleagues have brought in to share. The posters displayed on the lockers remind everyone that today is International Women's Day (IWD) 2016 and we're celebrating women's achievements and the progress made towards equality.

How did this happen and what's it about?

At 5 Pancras Square it can be a challenge to break through the enforced 'corporateness' but IWD presents us with an opportunity. What's not to like about a chance to celebrate the contribution made by women? So several of my friends working on Floor 3 agreed that it would be good to mark the occasion with a social event. Colleagues were encouraged to show support by wearing something purple or picking up a purple ribbon on the day. A soundtrack was put together of people's favourite inspirational songs to play in the background. And everyone was invited to come along at lunchtime, to bring some extra food to share, and to take the opportunity to relax and socialise. And people came! Mostly colleagues on the 3rd floor, but peo-

ple from almost every floor found their way to the event. In all, around 70 people joined in with many more discussing the event and passing on their best wishes

What's not to like about IWD?

You'd really have to be a bit of a misery to argue against women having equal access to education or healthcare. And why would anyone want to deny others the opportunity to work and be paid a decent wage? However, many people at work can be a bit reticent about doing anything that's seen as 'political'. Some women get put off by the idea that women's events might be dominated by militants, and then suddenly your entire personal life (and everything you're wearing) might be up for criticism. Men worry that they might be intruding on something that's been designated as women-only and that they'll end up being rounded upon. These concerns can make people shy away from events like International Women's Day. So I think this year we just wanted to cut right through all of that. Because the day is really about making common cause: everybody benefits from women's equality because everybody benefits from a workplace - and a world - where all people are treated respectfully and fairly. It's really that simple. What's not to like?

Louise Trewavas

Join UNISON today

● You cannot defend your terms and conditions on your own. You need to join a union. With over 3,000 members Camden UNISON is the largest union in the council. Join online or access PDFs of application forms at: www.camdenunison.org.uk/join

If you are already a member why not ask your colleagues to join?

There's strength in numbers.

● UPDATE DETAILS Have you moved or changed your job/workplace recently? If so please update your membership at: www.camdenunison.org.uk/update

● Visit the branch website: www.camdenunison.org.uk

● CONTACT Camden UNISON Branch Office, 59 Phoenix Road, Brill Place, London NW1 1ES Phone: 020 7974 1633

Camden Eye

Newsletter of Camden UNISON

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● Want to get involved? We need writers, cartoonists, photographers. Get in touch

● email marilyn.bramble-litchmore@camden.gov.uk

● The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of Camden UNISON, but the branch will defend the right of members to express those views.



Camden UNISON banner out in support of the Junior Doctors and being carried by George our branch secretary

Agency worker settlement

Camden UNISON has won a four figure pay settlement for a member who was an agency worker in a school.

Like many temp agencies nowadays, the member was forced to accept payment not from the agency itself but through an umbrella company. Umbrella companies use complex pay arrangements essentially to underpay workers, and dodge their employer tax and NI contributions.

This particular company also used a get out from the equal pay Agency Worker Regulations called the 'Swedish derogation'. This meant they were paying our member just £6.80 per hour, compared to permanent colleagues doing the same work for

£11.57 per hour. UNISON challenged this with the umbrella company, and we eventually took them to ACAS, where they agreed to pay the member compensation.

To any other workers who find themselves in the same situation, the member had this to say:

"If you are an agency worker who thinks they are being paid unfairly I recommend joining Unison. They help you understand your rights, offer advice and represent you when you need them. I did, and they won me compensation which I never thought would happen."

The member had also subsequently been appointed as a permanent member of staff at the school. We have also raised

this issue at the schools joint consultative committee (JCC: regular meetings between the union and management) and the corporate JCC, to try to ensure Camden stop using these companies which exploit workers, dodge tax, avoid the equal pay regulations and flout the council's London living wage policy. We will keep members informed of any progress in this matter.

If any other agency workers believe they are being underpaid or need help understanding umbrella company pay arrangements please speak to your local rep or contact John Shepherd (John.Shepherd@camden.gov.uk), and you can join UNISON and receive our full support.

John Shepherd

Farewell to Paul

When we appointed Paul England, an apparently modest, but quietly self-confident young man, as UNISON Office Branch Office Manager in 2009 I had one reservation. He seemed to be too good to be true. Happily, my worry proved ill-founded, Paul made himself all but indispensable to the running of our branch. He proved to be the embodiment of both competence and commitment. Whether the task was the swift production of accurate branch committee



minutes, ensuring placards were ready for picket lines or calmly dealing with a disgruntled member, Paul was up to the job. For now, Paul has returned to the North West of England and unfortunately the branch is not in a financial position to recruit a replacement. Then again, Paul would have been a tough act to follow. I am sure all branch officers and doubtless a good many stewards and members, who came to know Paul will join me in saying a heart-felt thanks to him and wishing our 'good and faithful servant' the very best over the months and years ahead.

George Binette