

Branch Newsletter

Have your say in the campaigns and activism of your branch

Our branch will hold its Annual General Meeting on 26 March. We depend upon the contribution of our members at AGM and Branch meetings to best inform how we allocate our time, personnel and resources. We hope to see you there. More details will be available on our website at www.unisoncommunity.org over the coming weeks.

Also, in recognising the community and voluntary workers need to access adequate support, advice and representation relating to their day to day work, and the massive contribution the sector as a whole has to make to society, UNISON community and voluntary branch are organising a community activists planning session, following the AGM on the 26th March 2010. (Contact Branch Development Officer – Seán Brady unisoncv@googlemail.com (07595219591), if you wish to participate or for more details)

A Campaigning Branch

Our branch has been involved in supporting and initiating many campaigns over the last year. This proactive approach to tackling the issues that affect our members and communities has paid off in successful campaigns, with many new branch members and activists emerging in tandem with developing campaigns. Some of the campaigns include:

Youth exclusion and community safety:

We have been campaigning with youth workers and young people as well as liaising with academics and other stakeholders in the question of youth exclusion and community safety. This has involved recruiting and organising amongst many of the community and voluntary organisations involved in delivering services around this issue. Also UNISON community and voluntary branch will be teaming up with UNISON's youth department to formulate a comprehensive campaigning strategy on young people and the issues that affect them. For too long our young people have been criminalised and marginalised in the media and by some political and community representatives. UNISON continues to fight on behalf of our most vulnerable young citizens.

Housing equality and community regeneration.

We have engaged in a proactive campaign of engagement with residents associations on the issues that affect communities across the north. One successful short term campaign has seen residents raise the issue of extortionate management fees in the local press and on the floor of the assembly. The campaign resulted in a decision in favour of the residents at Belfast small claims courts, setting a precedent for other residents and members facing similar problems at the hands of landlords and management companies.

Community Health.

UNISON is committed to protecting public services. Our members within the NHS have been campaigning for a long time to protect the priceless service they provide amidst continuous cuts and mismanagement. Our branch organised a successful public discussion attended by community

workers, councillors and MLA's and came out in support of our members in the health sector on the national day of action in November last year. We understand that as cuts are implemented in the NHS, attempts are being made to pass those services 'on the cheap' to the community and voluntary sector. We are working in conjunction with our colleagues in the health sector to coordinate on this issue.

Representing the member:

We have also, of course, been representing and campaigning on behalf of our members within the workplace. We have had many successes this year for our members as well as having secured new recognition agreements and initiated discussions on more which will come to fruition in 2010.

Education, empowerment and personal development.

Our branch has recruited and trained a number of stewards within many workplaces over the last year. We also provide a wide range of educational and vocational training at regional level which many members have accessed over the last year. We are confident our members will continue to engage with interest in UNISON's learning initiatives and are fully committed to making these services available to all members.

UNISON COMMUNITY online – www.unisoncommunity.org

Our website and technical team continues to go from strength to strength. We have covered the big news facing the sector over the last year as well as having produced a series of campaigning videos to raise awareness of the issues affecting the branch and sector as a whole. The website remains the easiest point of access to the resources of the UNION. It's your website! So log on with your name and membership number and make your views known in our discussion forums. For assistance or to make submissions to the site contact Seán Brady unisoncv@googlemail.com (07595219591).