

## Pay more, work longer, get less Your pension under attack

Pay more, work longer, get less. That's what the Tory-led government wants you to do to make you pay for the deficit created by the bankers.

UNISON members in colleges are facing serious attacks on their pension rights.

Most staff in colleges are part of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). The government has said that it wants to raise an extra billion pounds in contributions from members of the scheme. This means that the amount staff pay into the pension scheme each month will increase by around 50%.

They have also changed the way that inflation-linked increases in the pension are calculated and say that they want the age at which staff can retire to be increased.

UNISON thinks this is a grossly unfair attack on the pensions of college staff. The average pension payable in the local government pension scheme is just £4,200 a year. For female and part-time staff the average is even lower. These are not 'gold plated' pensions. They are the minimum required for a decent standard of living in retirement.



### What you can do

All members need to campaign to defend their pensions. UNISON is looking for pensions champions to help explain what these changes will mean for staff and lead the fight against

the changes. UNISON has produced straightforward information on the proposed changes that expose the myths peddled by the media about public sector pensions.

To become a pensions champion, get the factsheets or to find out more, visit the UNISON pensions website: [unison.org.uk/pensions](http://unison.org.uk/pensions)

### 26 March – you were there!



● See page 5 for more pictures.

### Stop press

AoC has made an opening pay offer of a £75 flat rate increase for all college staff in England. UNISON and other FE unions have rejected it. Negotiations continue. Members will be consulted on any final offer.



#### Contact

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## Pensions negotiations and campaign timetable

Below is the predicted government timetable for negotiations, consultation and implementation. The critical period will be between June and October.

### **Began April 2011**

Negotiations with government on public sector pensions

UNISON regional briefings/branch meetings

### **June onwards 2011**

UNISON training for pension champions and contacts

### **End of June 2011**

Negotiations with government due to end

### **July 2011**

Government departments consult on legislation that will increase contributions

### **July – September 2011**

UNISON consults with members on action they wish to take

### **October 2011**

Government issues statement on the 27 Hutton recommendations

### **October 2011**

Negotiations with government departments on Hutton recommendations

### **April 2012**

Scheme members' contributions start going up

### **January 2012**

Negotiations on new pension schemes continue

### **2012/2013**

UNISON members consulted on new scheme proposals

### **2014/2015**

New schemes implemented

## The truth about sickness absence

UNISON is increasingly aware that some employers are beginning to take a more aggressive and unsupportive approach to sickness absence.

The majority of colleges support their employees when they are ill, but a minority are looking to use the government's funding cuts as an excuse to penalise people for being ill.

These unscrupulous employers use the line that public sector workers take more time off due to illness than their colleagues do in the private sector. This is simply not true.

The truth is that absence rates have been falling over time in both the public and private sector. In the private sector some employers are much more likely to sack people with genuine health problems, rather than helping them return to work. This forces employees back into work before they are fully fit putting their long-term health at risk.

In March 2010, the TUC produced The Truth About Sickness Absence report, which smashed the myth that public service workers are always on the lookout for an excuse to 'pull a sickie'.

The TUC poll found that more than one in five public sector workers had been to work when they were really too ill to do so (21%). A further 41% (compared to 36% of private sector workers) had gone into work when unwell. Only 11% of public sector workers had never been to work when they were too ill to go.



### **Our message to colleges**

The vast majority of college staff in England have a sick pay entitlement of six months' full pay and six months' half pay after five years of service. This standard public sector condition should not be eroded. Attacking sick pay will not save money but simply punish people for being ill.

Our message to colleges is clear. We will work with you to implement positive sickness absence policies that look at tackling the causes of absence. But sick pay entitlements are not up for negotiation and UNISON is prepared to take action to defend them.

What is happening in your college? Email us at: [education@unison.co.uk](mailto:education@unison.co.uk)

### **FE & sixth form colleges cuts and redundancies survey**

As part of our campaign against the cuts we are collecting data on the number of college jobs under threat. Please log on to our survey website and let us know what is happening. The survey will only take a few minutes of your time. You can also share this link with colleagues working in other colleges. Find the survey at [http://www.unison.org.uk/education/further/pages\\_view.asp?did=12875](http://www.unison.org.uk/education/further/pages_view.asp?did=12875)



# EMA campaign forces government concessions



The government has been forced to make significant concessions on its plan to axe the EMA from August 2011 following pressure from UNISON, other unions and students. This means, that:

- students in their 3rd year who started college in 2009 will continue to get their EMA in 2011/12
- there will be a £20 a week EMA payment in 2011/12 for second year students who started courses in 2010 and currently get the full £30 allowance
- £180 million is to be allocated to colleges to distribute locally as an EMA replacement scheme.

Despite these concessions the government is still cutting almost

£400m in support for young people and the EMA will ultimately be axed.

However, the amount of money being made available for existing EMA students and the replacement scheme is more than originally stated. This should help protect the jobs of those staff responsible for administering student support funds in their college.

UNISON will continue to campaign on the unfairness of the replacement scheme and the savage cuts in overall funding for student support.

Campaigning by UNISON members alongside the NUS and other unions has forced the government to make significant concessions. This is proof that when we stand together, staff and students we can make a real difference.

## Further education and sixth form colleges seminar

UNISON's FE and sixth form seminar in Leeds was attended by large numbers of delegates from across the UK and received an outstanding evaluation from those who attended.

The seminar gave delegates the opportunity to get up to date information on issues affecting FE and six form college members. Expert speakers such as Iain Wright, Labour shadow minister for 14-19 reform and apprenticeships, answered a range of probing questions.

Members made it clear that proposed government cuts in the education sector were unfair and unnecessary.

The day was a mixture of workshops and presentations on subjects such as redundancy, pensions, and campaigning. We hope to build on this year's success and have an even bigger seminar next year.

A big thank you, too, to all the delegates whose contributions made it such a great success.

## IfL concessions

Following lengthy negotiations UNISON has secured key concessions on Institute for Learning (IfL) membership issues. IfL is the professional body for teaching staff in the FE and skills sector in England. Teachers and tutors in FE are required under the FE Teachers Qualifications Regulations 2007 to be a member of the IfL. We have agreed a paper with employers, IfL, UCU, ATL and the minister that clarifies the role of associate teachers. This paper will help UNISON members identify

whether or not they are actually required to join IfL. UNISON pressed very hard for this clarification following reports from members that some learning and learner support staff were expected to join IfL even though they were not in teaching roles.

The paper makes it clear that associate teachers must have a teaching role expressed in their contracts or job descriptions, albeit not with the full range of teaching responsibilities. The IfL membership fee is also set to be cut to £38 for the year or £68 for two years.

We have also secured concessionary rates for both those earning less than £16,000 a year and those employees earning below the income tax threshold.

For more information see the UNISON website [http://www.unison.org.uk/education/further/pages\\_view.asp?did=13014](http://www.unison.org.uk/education/further/pages_view.asp?did=13014). These concessions are not the end of the story – UNISON will join an IfL reference group and will push for a review of services and fees for associate teachers who will be consulted during the process.

# Islington College wins commitment to Living Wage

Following years of campaigning, City and Islington College UNISON branch has won a commitment by management to pay the London Living Wage (LLW).

This is a massive victory for the union, and will ensure that City and Islington College's most poorly paid workers will soon receive a fair, decent living wage.

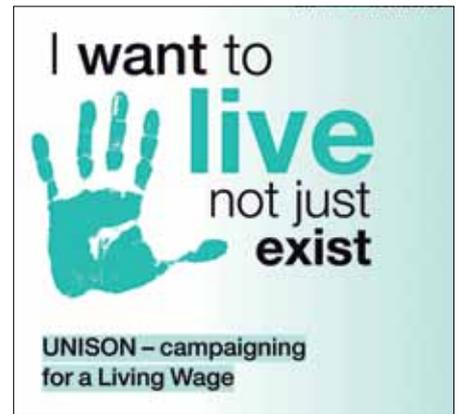
The branch along with UCU and NUT reps has repeatedly raised the issue of a two-tier workforce and the low pay and poor conditions suffered by the contracted-out cleaners, catering workers and security guards at the college.

Now, with support from UNISON's Hidden Workforce project, the college

branch has won the commitment from management that all contractors providing outsourced services will be required to pay the London Living Wage when the contracts are re-tendered this summer.

The LLW is calculated annually by the Living Wage Unit of the Greater London Authority. It is £8.30 an hour. The LLW is defined as "The threshold at which people can live above the poverty level in London with a sufficient safety net to also provide for quality of life."

The idea behind a living wage is that people who work in our community should be able to live decently and raise their families here. This requires a wage that



takes into account the area specific cost of living, as well as the basic expenses involved in supporting a family.

● For more on UNISON's Hidden Workforce Unit's work with outsourced workers visit: [unison.org.uk/hiddenworkforce](http://unison.org.uk/hiddenworkforce)

## Pay claims for 2011/12

UNISON and the FE unions have now formally submitted the 2011/12 pay claim for college staff in England to the Association of Colleges (AoC).

The claim calls for a 4% increase on all salaries and allowances with a £750 underpinning. The underpinning would ensure that no one gets less than a £750 increase. Justification for the claim is clear – members are struggling to cope with rapidly rising prices. Inflation now stands at over 5% and the lowest paid are hit the hardest by rising prices.

In the 12 months to March 2011 transport costs have increased by 8%. Essential basics such as bread and cereals have increased by 5.6% and fish has increased by 13.5%. As a result, low-paid college support staff are already struggling to provide even a basic diet for their households.

This is made worse by a large number of colleges failing to honour the AoC recommended minimum rate of pay. According to a recent trade union survey, 65% of colleges have a minimum rate of pay that is less than the nationally recommended £7.04.

Formal talks on the claim will take place in May and June. The claim for national pay negotiations for colleges in Wales is being finalised as we go to print. In Scotland, pay is determined locally.

## College funding 2011/12

Colleges in England have now been told by government how much public funding (grant income) they will be getting for 2011/12. As a result colleges will therefore be finalising budgets and some will be announcing job cuts and course closures.

The cuts to college funding are unprecedented and extremely serious. Nonetheless they are less severe than the government's cuts to higher education and local government. We also understand that overall the 'final' government funding allocations to colleges for 2011/12 are slightly better than originally feared. However, the situation will vary dramatically from college to college, with some colleges more affected by government's cuts than others.

UNISON's top priority is to campaign against the Tory-led government's agenda of cuts and austerity. While campaigning for political change we also need to ensure that some colleges don't use the current climate as an excuse to make even deeper cuts.

We have produced a briefing on college funding that will help UNISON members and reps challenge their college over any threatened cuts to jobs, terms, conditions and courses.

Download the briefing today at: [www.unison.org.uk/education/further](http://www.unison.org.uk/education/further)

# 26 March – you were there!

Speaking out in UNISON. Some said 500,000. Others, a million. There is no doubt that there was a massive turn out in London on 26 March to say “no” to the Tory plans to destroy vital public services.

What a fantastic first step in speaking out against the unnecessary and savage cuts to public services to pay for the mistakes of the bankers.



# Join UNISON – your friend at work

PLEASE FILL IN THIS FORM IN BLOCK CAPITALS USING BLACK INK AND GIVE IT TO YOUR UNISON REP OR SEND TO THE ADDRESS BELOW

**FREEPOST RSKU-RRGA-HHSJ, EDUCATION, UNISONCENTRE, 130 EUSTON ROAD, LONDON NW1 2AY**

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Please tick or fill in the boxes below

Mrs  Ms  Miss  Mr  Other

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### How would you describe your ethnic origin?

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Contact tel/voice/text/email

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		per week	per month	
Up to £38.47 <input type="checkbox"/>	Up to £2,000 <input type="checkbox"/>	£0.30	£1.30	A
£38.48–£96.16 <input type="checkbox"/>	£2,001–£5,000 <input type="checkbox"/>	£0.81	£3.50	B
£96.17–£153.84 <input type="checkbox"/>	£5,001–£8,000 <input type="checkbox"/>	£1.22	£5.30	C
£153.85–£211.53 <input type="checkbox"/>	£8,001–£11,000 <input type="checkbox"/>	£1.52	£6.60	D
£211.54–£269.23 <input type="checkbox"/>	£11,001–£14,000 <input type="checkbox"/>	£1.81	£7.85	E
£269.24–£326.92 <input type="checkbox"/>	£14,001–£17,000 <input type="checkbox"/>	£2.24	£9.70	F
£326.93–£384.61 <input type="checkbox"/>	£17,001–£20,000 <input type="checkbox"/>	£2.65	£11.50	G
£384.62–£480.76 <input type="checkbox"/>	£20,001–£25,000 <input type="checkbox"/>	£3.23	£14.00	H
£480.77–£576.92 <input type="checkbox"/>	£25,001–£30,000 <input type="checkbox"/>	£3.98	£17.25	I
£576.93–£673.08 <input type="checkbox"/>	£30,001–£35,000 <input type="checkbox"/>	£4.68	£20.30	J
£673.08+ <input type="checkbox"/>	over £35,000 <input type="checkbox"/>	£5.19	£22.50	K

Please tick the appropriate box to indicate how often you are paid

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Please tick this box if you are a student member in full-time education (including student nurses or Modern Apprentices).  
 Your subscription is £10 per year.

## 4. POLITICAL FUND

UNISON's Affiliated Political Fund (APF) is used to campaign for and promote UNISON policy and the need for quality public services within the Labour Party, locally and nationally, in Parliament and Europe. UNISON APF affiliates to the Labour Party.

UNISON's General Political Fund (GPF) is used to pay for campaigning at branch, regional and national levels of the union and for research and lobbying in Parliament and Europe. It is independent of support for any political party.

*It is important that you indicate a choice of fund by ticking one of the boxes below. Your subscription shown above includes a political fund payment so you do not pay any more by being in one of the funds.*

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- I wish to join UNISON and accept its rules and constitution.
- I authorise deduction of UNISON subscriptions from my salary/wages at the rate determined by UNISON in accordance with its rules to be paid over to them on my behalf and I authorise my employer to provide information to UNISON to keep my records up to date
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Affiliated Political Fund  General Political Fund

### Now please sign and date below

Signature

Date

### OTHER WAYS TO PAY

direct debit

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If you have been a member of a trade union before, please state which one:

### DATA PROTECTION

UNISON will process your membership information together with other information for administration, statistical analysis, conducting ballots and other statutory requirement purposes. We may also send you newsletters, journals and surveys and let you know about educational and campaigning matters. We will disclose your information to our service providers and agents for these purposes.

If you do not want any mailings from UNISON besides those required by statute as shown in bold above, please tick this box.

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