

# UNISON NEWS

**No. 4. Winter 2002**  
**Free to members**

**South West London & St George's Mental Health Trust Branch**



Kingston firefighters ... winning youthful support, and encouraging others, like staff at South Thames College, to fight back against low pay

As this issue of the UNISON bulletin was being written the firefighters were still in dispute over their campaign for a decent living wage.

Whatever the conclusion, we all owe a big debt of gratitude to the FBU for putting the issue of public sector pay right at the top of the political agenda.

Wherever firefighters have spoken they have said clearly – this isn't just about us, we're making a stand on behalf of all public sector workers who are struggling to get by on wages that simply haven't kept pace with inflation. Nowhere is that problem more acute than here in south London.

Latest research from Battersea and Wandsworth TUC shows that average property prices in the Boroughs we serve vary from just under £200,000 in Sutton up to a massive £350,000 in Richmond – you'd need a household income of £100,000 a year to be able to buy at the kind of price.

If you're looking to rent it's no easier. The cheapest one bed flats are on the market for between £550 and £650 a month, and for a family house you'd be looking at between £850 and £1000.

# Fair pay for all!

These are the harsh economic realities in South West London and in this Trust they mean that services have had to be closed down because we cannot recruit enough staff on the wages currently on offer.

### £6k for Met

That's why we need a significant increase in London Weighting. The Met police recently had their London allowance

increased to over £6000 with free travel on top – and it has made a real difference to their recruitment. That's the kind of level of London Weighting that we need across the public services.

And we need it to be applied fairly. As we point out in this bulletin, it's a nonsense that some of our own Trust staff get over £700 less London Weighting than others

despite the fact that the cost of living is high across our whole catchment area.

Recruitment problems are having an impact on our services right now: but if we don't get some decisive action on pay we will be facing much more dangerous problems in the future.

UNISON supports Ken Livingstone's demand that all new housing developments should have 50%

affordable accommodation as a matter of course. The problem is that the developers themselves are resisting this, and even if it does happen it will take years to make any kind of difference.

### Our Agenda for Change

We need some decisive action on pay now. Agenda for Change – the long-running talks over the restruc-

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turing of NHS pay scales – is being hyped up, but it's hard to see how 3% a year for the next three years – which is what the Government are proposing – will fill our 30% vacancy rates in Tooting, Tolworth and Sutton.

We will also have to fight hard to make sure that mental health services aren't marginalised in the whole Agenda for Change process.

There will be limited cash available, and the political pressure will be on for it to be allocated to high profile areas of medicine – with the services we provide shoved to the back of the queue.

The firefighters have proved an important point: you can bang on all you like about fair pay but nothing changes without pressure.

If public sector staff stand together to apply that pressure we've got a real chance of winning fair pay for all.

**Season's Greetings to all UNISON members**

## Secretary's comment

I wish all the trust UNISON members a very merry xmas and a happy new year. The UNISON branch of this Trust continues to speak up for its members and at every opportunity reminds the management that we all ask for is fairness, equality and justice.

The Trust has continued to change and expand and similarly your UNISON branch is having to deal with more cases and look after its members over a bigger area.

In recent times the Trust has produced some good policies to tackle bullying, harassment, violence and racist abuse and discrimination. But these policies will have no meaning if in practice the middle managers and human resources do not act accordingly.

As your union representatives we will continue to make sure that all employees feel valued and that the trust is fair and a family friendly employer.

More changes on employment practices are coming and we will be at the forefront of this. To make sure we are truly representative of your interests we welcome more involvement from all disciplines of staff and from right across all the areas within this Trust.

I can't speak on behalf of all our members unless I have your full support and you communicate your concerns to us.

As a branch we will make sure we train all new prospective representatives, and send them on relevant courses.

Our main areas of concern are

- Anxiety among social work staff
- Uncertainty about whether or not we are a health and social care Trust
- Unfilled vacancies and high number of agency staff especially among nursing, catering, portering and secretarial staff
- Communication and staff involvement
- A small number of disciplinary cases that could have been resolved informally
- Bullying and harassment is a problem UNISON has come across a small number of managers whose conduct give cause for concern. Fortunately, on the whole the trust is a fair employer
- Three empty houses in Burntwood Lane. It is high time some action was taken to utilise these properties.
- Across the Trust there are differences in contracts and London weighting allowances

In the coming year UNISON will continue to protect the interests of its members.

My plea to all our members is please help us to help you.



**Suresh Desai**  
Branch secretary



Springfield: even the smartest bit was built in 1840. Isn't it time for some modernisation?

## CHC slams condition of Trust buildings

The local community health council in Merton and Sutton has raised serious concerns with the South West London and St George's Trust over both the condition of buildings and the impact that staff shortages is having on the ability to provide quality care.

The CHC's concerns relate to two specific visits:

- John Meyer Ward at Springfield
- Chiltern Wing at Sutton

The CHC have been at pains to point out that none of their criticisms are aimed at staff who they accept are doing their best in very difficult circumstances.

The report on John Meyer Ward makes the following damning criticism:

"John Meyer is a 2-storey Victorian building with no disabled access, gloomy and unsuited to its use. Although 8 years ago complaints were made to Duncan Selbie, who promised action, little physical improvement has been made...."

These comments are particularly apt at a time when the government are continually lecturing us on the need to modernise.

How can you modernise when the physical working environment is as grim as the CHC have set out? UNISON intends to make this point directly to our local MP's.

The Trust have said in response that they "fully accept that physical environment on John Meyer ward is not suitable for a modern day intensive care unit." However, the best

that they can offer is that it may be temporarily re-housed in 2004.

So who's holding back the "modernising agenda" here? Is it the staff and the unions as Tony Blair would have it or is it the government themselves by failing to come up with the capital funding? Send your answers on a postcard to Gordon Brown c/o The Treasury.

The CHC's report on their visit to Chiltern Wing raised serious questions about the ability to provide services against a background of 20% staffing vacancies and also supports UNISON's call for the Trust to find the £3/4 million needed to harmonise London Weighting:

"If all parts of the Trust were to receive parity in London Weighting, it would cost the Trust

approximately £3/4 million extra each year.

If it could be shown to work as an incentive to recruitment, it would be preferable that Trust funds be spent this way rather than see further closure of beds."

The CHC are referring to the enforced closure of Ascot ward due to staff shortages. A temporary move that has now been made permanent. And as the CHC rightly point out to the Trust:

"This difficulty with unfilled vacancies has an obvious effect on staff morale. The Unit is trying to maintain high standards, but it is becoming more and more difficult to manage that. The staff crisis has very obvious effects on patient care...."

It would be nice to know that someone in a position

## UNISON launches petition on London Weighting

A petition has been launched by UNISON calling on the Trust to pay the same level of London Weighting to all staff regardless of where they work.

As it stands, SWAG staff working in Sutton, Kingston and Richmond get over £700 less per year than the rest. This is a nonsense and it may also be illegal.

Under the equal pay legislation staff working for the same

employer, doing a similar job are entitled to the same pay. This isn't happening here.

We know of staff who live in the same street with the same living costs - one works in Tooting and a nurse and the other one works in Sutton doing the same job but for £700 less. Work that one out.

The Trust have said that it would cost £3/4 million to harmonise London Weighting and they say they haven't got the cash.

When challenged to play fair they have turned the argument on its head and have asked what services they should cut to find the difference!

The fact is that the government should be asked to find the money - it shouldn't come from service budgets.

UNISON would be quite happy to join the Trust in pitching the case for an equal rate of London Weighting to the government ministers.

The overwhelming majority of staff have been signing the UNISON London Weighting petition and the RCN have given it their support.

We intend to hand it in at a meeting of the Trust Board. If we don't get any joy we may have no choice but to follow the legal route.

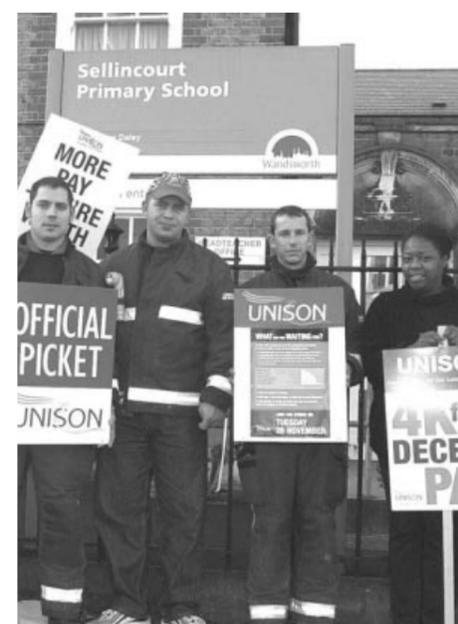
We're already paying a heavy price. Ascot Ward in Sutton has been closed due to staff shortages.

The extra 700 quid on

London Weighting isn't the be all and end all but it would help and it would certainly show that the Trust are taking the staffing crisis seriously.

Of course, what's really needed is for London Weighting to be levelled up for everyone to the kind of rate that the police currently enjoy - over £6000.

Then we might start making some serious inroads into the recruitment and retention crisis.



November 26: firefighters join UNISON school staff and teaching unions in a day of strike action on London weighting

# Wandsworth Council turns screw on CMHTs

Reports from Wandsworth Approved Social Workers seconded over to the health Trust have confirmed that the Council are turning the screw on budgets as part of a political drive to hold down the Council Tax.

A year on from the secondment of the ASW's angry front line staff have confirmed that:

- There is no money for residential care placements
  - Staff are being encouraged not to request placements
  - The housing register is effectively frozen
  - There is impossible pressure on beds
  - Wandsworth are refusing to create any new ASW posts
  - Clients are being lost as they transferred out of the Borough to B&B's.
- Staff are asking serious questions over whether Wandsworth are meeting their statutory obligation under Section 117 which hold them "legally responsible for a long term package of care."
- Staff have also warned that it is only a matter of



Wandsworth council's policy of privatising home care services has been exposed in "Penny Pinchers", a report for the council unions and Battersea & Wandsworth TUC.

time before there is another serious incident resulting in a wholly preventable death.

Battersea and Wandsworth TUC have agreed to pick up the case and to work with Labour Councillors in Wandsworth to put the issue on to the political agenda.

Geoff Martin, BWTUC Lead Organiser, said:

"Wandsworth Council have learnt nothing from the death of Jenny Morrison, one of their social workers who was stabbed to death, and they seem to be intent on putting more staff and clients at risk.

"It's a scandal that staff are being advised not to request placements in the community because their requests will be turned down on the grounds of cost.

"We will do whatever we can to expose this vindictive, penny-pinching approach and will work with other local politicians to force through a change of policy."

BWTUC is keen to find out if there have been similar problems in the other Borough's covered by the Trust. Ring BWTUC in confidence on 0208 682 3663 if you have any information to pass on.



Andre Downer



Barbara Bernard



Janet Grimes



Joan Stevenson



Roy Simpson



Tita Plaza



Tony Rayner



Bob Joseph



Marilyn Winkler

# Private Finance dogs the new Queen Mary's

The slow and tortuous Private Finance Initiative continues to dog the new development on the Queen Mary's Hospital site with latest estimates suggesting that the project might be completed by the spring of 2005 if everything goes according to plan.

Meanwhile, the new Queen Mary's remains nothing more than a hole in the ground nailing the lie that the private sector have got solutions to all of the problems in the NHS.

From the most recent reports it is clear that the Trust are concerned about the ability of the private companies involved in the new hospital to deliver quality support services that recognise the special needs of mental health services:

"The Board emphasised the importance of both Catalyst and the PCT being sensitive to the particular needs of the mental



health services, and to the importance of contractual means to ensuring acceptable performance over the full life of the contract."

The answer to these concerns is simple – keep the support services under direct NHS control with staff on decent terms and conditions and cut out the

middle men and women from the private sector who are almost guaranteed to make poor decisions in their drive to screw the maximum profit out of the new hospital.

Meanwhile, all is not rosy in the wider world of the Private Finance Initiative. Many of the big companies involved in the projects are in serious financial trouble and one or two are facing the real possibility of going bust.

UNISON always warned that this was one of the central dangers of PFI. If a company goes to the wall in the middle of a new development who will pick up the pieces?

You've got it: it will be the NHS. It would be a total nightmare.

**Make sure you join**



**How to find your nearest UNISON branch reps**

**UNISON office**  
**0208 682 6989**  
**SPRINGFIELD STEWARDS**  
**BRANCH SECRETARY**  
 SURESH DESAI 42416  
**BRANCH CHAIR**  
 JANET GRIMES 42719  
**HEALTH AND SAFETY**  
 TITA PLAZA 42366  
 ANDRE DOWNER 42033  
 CAROL RUTZ 42870  
 MAGGIE NORGROVE 42559  
 JOAN STEVENSON 42033  
 BARBARA BERNARD 42733  
**NIGHT REP**  
 SAM BOAFO 42210  
**SUTTON REPS**  
**BRANCH TREASURER**  
 BOB JOSEPH 8669 0782  
 MARILYN WINKLER



**CHRIS GENTER**  
**LIZ KIDDIE**  
**BARRY HARDING**  
**KINGSTON REPS**  
 ROY SIMPSON 8546771 bleep 509  
 TONY RAYNER 8337 0246

## Danger – violence at work!

Reports from all areas of the Trust confirm that the pressure on our services, against the background of severe staff shortages, are combining to increase the daily risk of assaults on our members.

The government have repeatedly promised a Zero Tolerance policy on workplace violence in the NHS but once again their focus appears to be on the general side and not on mental health.

We have warned before that there's a risk of violence, harassment and assault becoming institutionalised and we must take steps to stop that from happening. The union can only do that if staff take action to protect themselves.

First off we need more health and safety reps, more risk assessment and more continuous inspection of safety issues. If you become a Health and Safety rep the Trust are obliged to provide time off for training and we will get you onto a course.

You will then have the full weight of the law on your side. There should be a health and safety rep in every area of the Trust.

If you haven't got one, get together and decide who's going to do it and let us know in the UNISON office.

Remember, if you feel that there is a clear and imminent danger in

the workplace the law says that you don't have to work there. Let's start using our rights to get the safety issue sorted out.

If you are assaulted UNISON will support you legally and we have recently won compensation for members here in South London and St George's but again, you have a crucial role to play.

If you're a victim here's what you have to do to protect your interests:

- Report the incident in writing in the incident book and inform your line manager.

- Report the incident to the police and get a crime number

- Report the incident to the DSS and register it as an industrial injury (UNISON can help)

- Report the incident on the UNISON legal application form available from the Branch

This might sound like heavy stuff – but you have to do it.

Even a minor incident can end up having long term implications and by following the four step procedure you will be fully covered. It will also be invaluable for any insurance application or any claim to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Protect yourselves and your colleagues and don't let violence become part of the job.

## Ministers press ahead with Mental Health Bill

UNISON is one of over 50 organisations that has been supporting the Mental Health Alliance (MHA), a coalition of groups who share common concerns about the Government's proposals to reform the Mental Health Act (1983).

Although the proposals were not included in the Queen's Speech, ministers have made it clear they intend to press ahead, regardless of the obvious widespread opposition.

A Parliamentary lobby against the Bill was held in October, just weeks before the

Queen's Speech.

The Alliance's response to the government's draft Mental Health Bill accused ministers of not listening to their concerns.

While there is a need to improve on the old Mental Health Act of 1983, there are key elements of this Bill that will actually make mental health services worse:

- It will 'backfire' – as more compulsory detentions and forced treatments in the community will drive people away from seeking services.

- The new criteria for compulsion are far



Milburn: should he be released into the community?

too wide

- There are no rights to services – which means people will still be turned away from

services when they need them

- Essential safeguards for detained patients are missing.

### APPLICATION FORM

Please fill in this form in BLOCK CAPITALS, and send it to us at the **Union Office, Springfield Hospital, 61 Glenburnie Road, London SW17 7DJ.**

#### YOUR DETAILS

Mrs  Ms  Miss  Mr First name Other initial(s)

Surname

Address

Postcode

Workplace address (if different from above)

Postcode

Job title/occupation

National Insurance number (from your payslip)

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

Employer's name

Payroll number (from your payslip)

- I wish to join UNISON and accept its rules and constitution.
- I authorise deduction of the following Political Fund payment as part of my subscription: Tick one box only
  - Affiliated Political Fund
  - General Political Fund
- I authorise deduction of UNISON subscriptions from my salary/wages at the rate determined by UNISON to be paid over to them on my behalf and I authorise my employer to provide to UNISON information to keep my records up to date.

If you are, or have been, a member of the Freemasons you must declare this in writing when completing this form.

I wish to pay by direct debit/cheque (please tick if appropriate)

Student members in full time education (including student nurses) £10 per year  
Signed Date

#### YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS

(rates current at 1 October 1999 and include your Political Fund payment)

Please tick your annual pay before stoppages

Weekly Monthly pay	▼	Annual pay	Band	weekly	
				subs	subs
Up to £38.46	<input type="checkbox"/>	Up to £2,000	A1	£0.42	£1.81
£38.46-£96.15	<input type="checkbox"/>	£2001-£5000	A2	£0.90	£3.90
£96.17-£134.61	<input type="checkbox"/>	£5001-£7000	B	£1.23	£5.34
£134.62-£192.30	<input type="checkbox"/>	£7001-£10,000	C	£1.52	£6.59
£192.32-£288.46	<input type="checkbox"/>	£10001-£15000	D	£1.80	£7.78
£288.48-£384.61	<input type="checkbox"/>	£15001-£20000	E	£2.21	£9.57
£384.63-£480.76	<input type="checkbox"/>	£20001-£25000	F	£3.31	£13.57
£480.78+	<input type="checkbox"/>	Over £25,000	G	£3.88	£16.81

For UNISON use

Now please sign and date below and return this form to the Union Office, Springfield Hospital, 61 Glenburnie Road, SW17 7DJ

## We need YOU!



Have you ever thought about getting more involved in your Union?

If you have, we can guarantee that we won't throw you in at the deep end.

We'll only ask you to do as much as you're prepared to take on.

Although we're always on the look out for new stewards and health and safety reps there are plenty of other ways that you can get involved.

If you are interested please don't hesitate. Just a tick a box or two on this slip and send it back to us. Go on, you know it makes sense!

I'm interested in getting more involved in UNISON and would like more information on the following:

- Shop Steward  Health and Safety
- Workplace contact  Black Members Rep
- Gay and Lesbian Rep
- Young members' Rep

Name .....

Department .....

Phone/Extension/Address .....

Please return to:

UNISON Office, Springfield Hospital,  
61 Glenburnie Road, London SW17 7DJ