

NOTTS UNISON NEWS

SEPT/OCT 2002

Web Site: <http://pages.unisonfree.net/nottscounty/>

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MEMBERS VOTE TO ACCEPT PAY OFFER

UNISON members in Notts County Council have voted on the ACAS brokered pay offer:

Accept = 1125
Reject = 916

Your Branch of UNISON sent out approx 9700 ballot papers to members' home addresses (where we had them, otherwise they went to a work address with a note asking for home details). Over 2000 of you voted (which is about average for postal ballots). This result was passed on to UNISON's Regional Office who reported that only one branch in the East Midlands has voted to reject the offer. The national result was approx 79% in favour of acceptance. The other 2 unions also accepted the deal.

The 55/45 split in Nottinghamshire would suggest that although members are unhappy with the offer they have recognised that major national action would be needed to improve the offer.

The closeness of the result locally should serve as a warning to our employers. They need to address the problems of recruitment and retention of lowest paid as well as the alleged problems at the top of the pay tree.

And the national employers' side should think ahead; with a 2 year deal, the next negotiations will take place in the run up to a General Election...

The proposed pay scales are on page 3 and the branch website.

Now's the time to join UNISON!

Normally about 100 people a month apply to join the branch. In July and August our branch staff processed 865 applications and more are still coming in. These figures reflect those joining to take part in the strike on 17th July.

We'd like to thank the office staff for all their hard work behind the scenes, including dealing with abusive phone calls from those who would rather resign than come out on strike.

Can we assume that those few ex-members will be accepting the 2.5% that was originally offered?



You can contact your Branch of
UNISON at:

Nottinghamshire County
UNISON
39-41 Loughborough Road
West Bridgford
Nottingham
NG2 7LJ
Tel: 0115 981 0405
Fax: 0115 981 5697
E-mail: nottunison@aol.com

RETIRING SOON?

If so, you can join UNISON's Retired Members Section for a one off lifetime payment of just £15. Retired Membership is open to all who have at least 2 years continuous membership of UNISON at the date of retirement. But you must sign up within 3 months of retiring. Unfortunately we do not get provided with details of our members retiring or approaching retirement age. So the onus is on the retired member to let us know. So if you are about to retire and would like to join our Retired Members Section, please contact the Branch Office for further details.

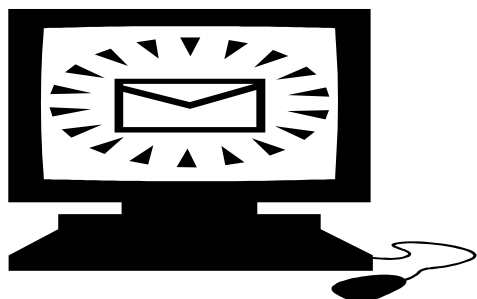
MOVED HOUSE OR WORKPLACE?

It is important that we have an accurate record of members' home and work addresses. This is so we can send you UNISON information and to comply with legal restrictions should we ever need to ballot members for industrial action. If you have recently changed address, please don't forget to inform us at the Branch Office.

E-MAIL ADDRESSES

We have set up an e-mail news service for the branch.

If there is a press release, some urgent news or changes to the branch web site, we can send you an e-mail. If you are interested could you please send your name, department/ employer, and e-mail address to the Branch Communications Officer, Bob Watt, at the following e-mail address: **nottscounty@unisonfree.net**



Childcare Focus Group

Reviewing the progress over the last 6 months

DATE: Wednesday 23rd October 2002

VENUE: Committee Room B, County Hall, West Bridgford

TIME: 12.30pm (light refreshments provided for working lunch)

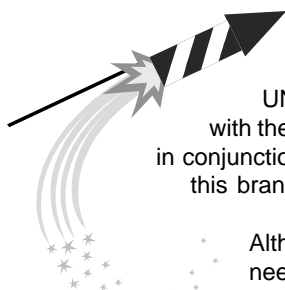
Agenda:

- Update on the questionnaire
- Where we go from here
- Motion for Women's Conference
- Discussion on other information and action



To help with numbers can you confirm your attendance with Linda Krelle (Secretary of Women's Self Organised group). Contact 0115 9774389 to speak to Linda or leave a message with at the Branch office 0115 981 5697

STRIKING WITH A BANG!



Members in Further Education colleges have rejected the employers' pay offer of 2.3% or £400 for staff up to scale point 11. As a result UNISON is balloting members for industrial action with the initial day of action to take place on 5th November in conjunction with NATFHE. This will affect 850 members of this branch.

Although the government appeared to recognise the need for the new college pay initiative for support staff with some additional money, UNISON said £12 million was not enough to avert strike action.

UNISON Senior National Officer Christina McAnea said:

"The government's message to staff in colleges is that we value you – just not very much. This £12 million falls far short of the £33 million needed to get the college pay initiative up and running this year. This is not enough to enable us to reconsider strike action. There is no guarantee that colleges will use this amount to improve pay.

"The government has said this would support performance related payments of £500 to 24,000 support staff – but there are 85,000 support staff working in further education. So how will colleges determine the lucky few?"

UNISON is urging the Association of Colleges (AOC) to re-open negotiations and start developing a longer term pay strategy, but they have refused. Hence the ballot

Notts UNISON News Deadlines 2002

The deadlines for getting articles in to your newsletter is 12 noon on the following Fridays:

25th October (November/December edition)

20th December (January/February 2003 edition)

Each newsletter takes about a week to typeset (providing everyone who promises an article actually gets it in on time) and then about 2 weeks to print and distribute. So please allow for this if, say, you want to put a notice of a meeting in your newsletter.

Bob Watt

Communications Officer

PAY 2002



Well it's really "Pay 2002 and 2003". The 1 day strike on 17th July saw an improvement on the 3% being brokered at ACAS. The 2 year deal has achieved a minimum wage of £5/hour in local government, a campaigning issue for the unions for several years. It also sees extra increases for those on the bottom 2 pay points, this will affect over 2500 employees in this Council working in cleaning, catering and care homes in both the Social Services and Environment Departments.

UNISON has had discussions with the payroll team who hope to have the new pay rates in place from 1st October and back pay in November pay packets. For weekly paid staff, calculating the back pay will have to cover 30 weeks' worth of time sheets.

NCC Grades	Spinal column point	'01/'02		1st Apr '02		1st Oct '02		1st Apr '03	
		Annual pay	Hourly rate (£/hr)	Annual pay	Hourly rate (£/hr)	Annual pay	Hourly rate (£/hr)	Annual pay	Hourly rate (£/hr)
SCP 4 to 9 are the former Manual grades 1 to 6	4	9267	4.80	9,648	5.00	9,834	5.10	10,278	5.33
	5	9588	4.97	9,876	5.12	10,068	5.22	10,521	5.45
	6	9912	5.14	10,209	5.29	10,308	5.34	10,668	5.53
	7	10233	5.30	10,539	5.46	10,641	5.52	11,013	5.71
	8	10554	5.47	10,872	5.64	10,977	5.69	11,361	5.89
SCP 4 to 10 = Scale 1	9	10875	5.64	11,202	5.81	11,310	5.86	11,706	6.07
	10	11100	5.75	11,433	5.93	11,544	5.98	11,949	6.19
Scale 2	11	11817	6.13	12,171	6.31	12,291	6.37	12,720	6.59
	12	12066	6.25	12,429	6.44	12,549	6.50	12,987	6.73
	13	12390	6.42	12,762	6.62	12,885	6.68	13,335	6.91
Scale 3	14	12618	6.54	12,996	6.74	13,122	6.80	13,581	7.04
	15	12879	6.68	13,266	6.88	13,395	6.94	13,863	7.19
	16	13188	6.84	13,584	7.04	13,716	7.11	14,196	7.36
	17	13500	7.00	13,905	7.21	14,040	7.28	14,532	7.53
Scale 4	18	13764	7.13	14,178	7.35	14,316	7.42	14,817	7.68
	19	14283	7.40	14,712	7.63	14,853	7.70	15,372	7.97
	20	14802	7.67	15,246	7.90	15,393	7.98	15,933	8.26
	21	15342	7.95	15,801	8.19	15,957	8.27	16,515	8.56
Scale 5	22	15741	8.16	16,212	8.40	16,371	8.49	16,944	8.78
	23	16203	8.40	16,689	8.65	16,851	8.73	17,442	9.04
	24	16734	8.67	17,235	8.93	17,403	9.02	18,012	9.34
	25	17265	8.95	17,784	9.22	17,955	9.31	18,582	9.63
Scale 6	26	17823	9.24	18,357	9.52	18,537	9.61	19,185	9.94
	27	18417	9.55	18,969	9.83	19,155	9.93	19,824	10.28
	28	19014	9.86	19,584	10.15	19,776	10.25	20,469	10.61
SO1	29	19770	10.25	20,364	10.56	20,562	10.66	21,282	11.03
	30	20433	10.59	21,045	10.91	21,249	11.01	21,993	11.40
	31	21078	10.93	21,711	11.25	21,921	11.36	22,689	11.76
SO2	32	21702	11.25	22,353	11.59	22,569	11.70	23,358	12.11
	33	22341	11.58	23,010	11.93	23,235	12.04	24,048	12.47
	34	22971	11.91	23,661	12.26	23,889	12.38	24,726	12.82
SCP 33 -49 = PO Grades	35	23451	12.16	24,156	12.52	24,390	12.64	25,245	13.09
	36	24072	12.48	24,795	12.85	25,035	12.98	25,911	13.43
	37	24750	12.83	25,494	13.21	25,740	13.34	26,640	13.81
	38	25473	13.20	26,238	13.60	26,493	13.73	27,420	14.21
	39	26310	13.64	27,099	14.05	27,363	14.18	28,320	14.68
	40	27003	14.00	27,813	14.42	28,083	14.56	29,067	15.07
	41	27717	14.37	28,548	14.80	28,827	14.94	29,835	15.47
	42	28422	14.73	29,274	15.17	29,559	15.32	30,594	15.86
	43	29133	15.10	30,006	15.55	30,297	15.70	31,356	16.25
	44	29847	15.47	30,741	15.93	31,041	16.09	32,127	16.65
	45	30516	15.82	31,431	16.29	31,737	16.45	32,847	17.03
	46	31254	16.20	32,193	16.69	32,505	16.85	33,642	17.44
	47	31971	16.57	32,931	17.07	33,249	17.23	34,413	17.84
	48	32682	16.94	33,663	17.45	33,990	17.62	35,181	18.24
	49	33384	17.30	34,386	17.82	34,719	18.00	35,934	18.63

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE PERSONNEL STRATEGY

NCC employees face a serious threat to our terms and conditions

You may have seen the coverage in InContact or read the NCC broadcasts sent from the Chief Executive about the *Personnel Strategy*, and the benefits it will supposedly bring. If your knowledge comes from these various letters or articles then you may be under the impression that it is a good thing. We thought it was time to ensure that all UNISON members understand what the Strategy is really about and how it will affect them.

Partnership or dictatorship?

We have been told that in order to make the Authority more "efficient", we must agree to changes in our conditions of service. Although we know that the current procedures aren't foolproof, we want to see changes that will improve our working conditions, not undermine them. There are no direct cost implications attached to these proposals; they are more of a management "wish-list". Nevertheless, the authority is holding the unions to ransom by insisting that they will only involve us in the job evaluation exercise if we go with their agenda.

"Partnership" is a word frequently heard in the County Council. We are told that management want to work "in partnership" with the trade unions. But what kind of partnership exists when one side imposes deadlines, changes the rules to suit and delivers ultimatums?

We are negotiating through the collective bargaining structures to win a fair deal for all of us. We will keep you up-to-date on our progress. We want to find a resolution to the problems we face, but if we can't, it may take your support to achieve.

Job evaluation

As part of the Single Status agreement back in 1997 (when manual and white collar terms and conditions became one), our employers agreed to a national job evaluation scheme. This is a method by which all jobs are compared against objective measures, so that we can get away from anomalies within the current pay structures, e.g. jobs undertaken by men being valued more than jobs undertaken by women. Notts County Council has refused to apply the nationally agreed scheme to all employees; instead it is applying the Hay scheme to all employees graded above SO2. This scheme is one that has been developed by a private consultancy. Councillors and Chief Officers have said that they will only begin to evaluate posts below that threshold in 2003/2004 using the nationally agreed scheme, once the most senior posts have been sorted out.

We have also been told that if we do not agree to having two schemes then the Council will impose the Hay scheme on all employees. It should be noted that the Hay scheme favours the higher paid and the national scheme the lower paid. Not only did we have to agree this but we are negotiating upon a wide range of other changes to our terms and conditions. These changes are detailed below.

Revised policies and procedures

As well as implementing job evaluation the Personnel Strategy contains major changes to a number of the Council's formal procedures. There are changes to the disciplinary, harassment, grievance, sickness, capability and appeals procedures.

Most of us hope that we never have any involvement in these formal procedures. However, if we do, we need to have confidence in their fairness and integrity. Unfortunately, the proposals that are in front of us will largely disadvantage employees if implemented in their current form.

With the exception of the appeals process (a new version of which has already been implemented), management want revised procedures to be in place by February next year.

Copies of the full proposals can be obtained from your local steward. Please feel free to pass on your comments!

"IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO..."



One of the most noticeable factors in the recent "discussions" with the Council has been the tendency of the employer to rush out e-mails to all staff setting out their version of events.

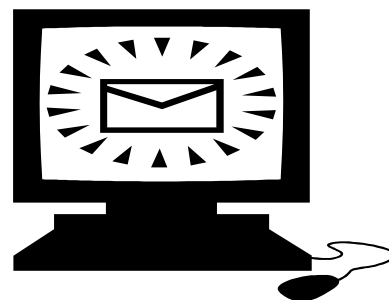
This speedy distribution of information is a product of having control of the council's intranet and e-mail address book. Unfortunately, we do not have that luxury. We rely on members giving us their e-mail addresses, whether at work or at home, so that we can keep them in touch with developments of negotiations etc.

We currently run a mailing list (which is advertised on page 2 of this newsletter). All you have to do is send an e-mail to:

nottscounty@unisonfree.net

with the subject "mailing list" and details of your department/employer and you will be added to the list.

With the proposals outlined on the left, it is important that we can keep members informed of developments. Members need to know what the branch is really doing to defend their interests, rather than hear it second hand from sources with their own axe to grind.



At a time when the Council is very keen to get its version of reality out first, the more members we can let have the full picture the better.

Send us your e-mail today!



HEALTH & SAFETY

Work can be a risky business. UNISON knows that health and safety in the workplace are very important for our members. What follows are a series of articles about different H&S issues that could affect you and your colleagues.

Every workplace should have a H&S rep but the reality is that too few people are willing to come forward to be trained. If you want to know more about being a H&S rep, you can contact one of the Branch H&S Officers:

Reneen Hopewell or Jim Connolly, via the Branch Office on 0115 981 0405

FIRE SAFETY

Everyone knows fire, and smoke from fire, can, and do, kill hundreds of people a year. Employees who are employed by the County Council need to know the precautions and their own responsibility to protect themselves and others in case of a fire. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 states that the employer is to provide a safe working environment. The Fire Precautions Act 1971 imposed a duty to ensure employers provide escape in the event of fire and that this can be done at all times. The Act also states that fire fighting equipment is provided and in working order. Employees are trained in what to do in the event of fire. Fire Marshals are appointed to help with evacuation of staff, especially with disabled staff and are trained in the use of evac-chairs. Employees have to know what to do in a fire and know who their Fire Marshals are.

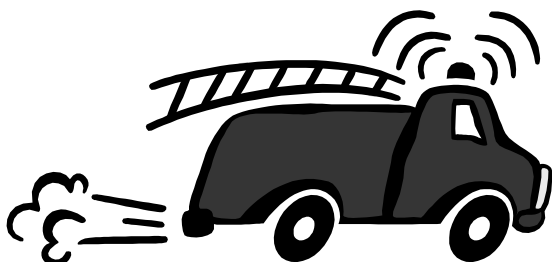
Training is important in understanding what action is taken when a fire alarm goes. The training will also instruct staff how to raise the alarm, escape routes, and use fire-fighting equipment (although any fire fighting equipment should only be used by trained persons).

Fire doors should be kept closed and **not** wedged open. Some are on magnetic hold that disengages when the alarm goes. Fires should only be tackled if it is a small fire and the staff have seen it start straight away before it gets larger. All training of fire drills and instruction should be entered in the Fire Log Book, along with any fire incidents and how it was dealt with. Fire signs should comply within the Health and Safety Regulations 1996 and signs and directional signs to be placed where staff can see them (not on notice boards or covered by other information on walls). Some doors will be highlighted by lighting to show exits in cases of a fire. All fire escape routes are to be kept clear and not cluttered by chairs, filing cabinets etc. Waste paper bins should be metal to ensure no fires.

All County Council buildings are non-smoking. This is to cut down on fires. Smoke detectors should be placed in toilets as these are non-smoking areas too. Fire fighting equipment will be inspected and maintained by the Fire Brigade. The Fire Prevention Officer will make regular inspections to premises.

Fire extinguishers have been colour coded by European Manufacturing standards since 1997. These are:

- => **Red Container:** for paper textiles
- => **Beige container (foam):** for gas fires, extinguishing liquids, liquifiable solids.
- => **Black container (CO²):** electrical, liquids, gas fires.
- => **Blue container (dry powder):** electrical equipment where water damage must be kept to a minimum.



The Fire Brigade and Health and Safety Inspectors will liaise with each other on any issues relating to fire precautions. Line Managers need to know what action they should take and there should be consultation with any disabled employees to achieve a quick and safe evacuation.

If you have any worries or concerns about fire evacuation or training, consult your Supervisor or Line Manager or contact your Fire Marshall/Safety Rep. Visually impaired staff can be encouraged to familiarise themselves with escape routes or have a "buddy" system where another person who works nearby can assist the evacuation. Hearing impaired staff may hear an alarm if it is very loud or alternatives like light signals or vibrating devices can be used. The Royal National Institute for the Deaf, 19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1 may be able to help.

Lifts should not be used in the event of fires and notices placed at the side of lifts to remind people. Fire drills should be held once or twice a year. Some of these drills should not be announced or pre-planned. Notices should be placed in prominent places indicating action taken in the event of fire.

All staff should know what to do in the event of a fire. Do you?



DERMATITIS

Every year eighty thousand people suffer from skin problems caused, or made worse by work. These can be avoided. The skin is the heaviest organ in the human body. It is also very vulnerable to injury. One of the main risks to the skin is dermatitis. Dermatitis means inflammation of the skin. It is sometimes called eczema. The main symptoms can include itching, cracking, blistering and ulceration. If someone has dermatitis the skin often looks red, sore and scaly. There are many different types of dermatitis but one of the main causes of the illness developing is contact with substances used at work.

WHAT CAUSES DERMATITIS?

There are two main types of dermatitis caused by work. The first is called irritant **contact dermatitis**. This condition arises from working with substances that physically damage the skin when they come into contact. Among the chemicals that can cause this type of damage are many in common use such as acids and alkalis (e.g. caustic soda, or cement) and organic solvents (white spirit and alcohol). Organic solvents can dissolve the skins protective layer of oils leaving it dry cracked and vulnerable. Some strong irritants can cause immediate damage resulting in serious skin burns. Many weaker substances may require days of contact before there is any visible effect.

The second main type of dermatitis is called **allergic contact dermatitis**. This accounts for about twenty per cent of all forms of work-related dermatitis and is caused by certain chemicals called "sensitisors". This is where the body's immune system reacts to one of these substances. In many cases someone can work with a substance for years without any reaction and then suddenly develop dermatitis. Once a person becomes sensitised, even minute exposure may cause a severe reaction. It is quite common to find that once someone develops allergic contact dermatitis in reaction to one substance they also become "cross sensitised" to a range of substances.

WHO GETS DERMATITIS?

Anyone can get dermatitis, but it is more common in certain jobs. Some UNISON members, such as nurses, laboratory workers, some craft workers, cooks and cleaners are all far more likely to develop dermatitis than the general population. This is because of the chemicals and substances they work with and also the environment, especially if the workplace is hot or humid. Wet work also helps dermatitis develop. Some of the possible substances that can lead to dermatitis developing which you should look out for are:

- => **Cleaning and laundry:** rubber gloves, detergents, soaps, caustic soda, disinfectants, bleaches, washing powders, cleaning fluids, and ammonia
- => **Catering:** food ingredients (including flours, spices and sugar), cleaning materials, and nickel and chrome from sinks and other surfaces
- => **Care work:** cleaning materials, wet work, rubber gloves, dyes, shampoos, and contact with animals
- => **Grounds maintenance:** fertilisers, herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, treated bulbs and seeds, tulips, daffodils, and certain woods and wood products
- => **Office work:** correcting fluids, copy paper, photocopier chemicals, adhesives, and ink removers
- => **Laboratory technicians and technical workers:** a wide range of chemicals especially organic solvents and in particular alcohols, but also waxes, toluene, xylene, phenol, acids, mercury bichloride, and x-ray chemicals
- => **Craft and maintenance:** de-scaling and cleaning chemicals, solvents, paints, thinners, creosote, resins, adhesive, super glue, cement, plaster, stainers, mineral fibres, fibre board, mdf, rubber, and pitch
- => **Drivers:** oil, petrol, disinfectants, anti-freeze, chrome, and rubber

This list is not comprehensive and if a skin problem develops it is important that you are properly examined by a trained doctor to see what is causing the condition. Some substances can be shown to cause dermatitis in a person by a process called patch testing, in other cases a more detailed examination is necessary. Dermatitis can be caused by a combination of factors so there is not always one single substance that can be shown to be responsible. Remember dermatitis can develop suddenly as a result of exposure to a substance that has had no effect on you in the past.

AVOIDANCE

Dermatitis can be easily avoided. These simple steps can help prevent you from developing dermatitis:

=> **Cutting out chemicals:** reduce the number of chemicals. Often safer ways of doing the job are possible or chemicals are not necessary.

=> **Substitution:** substitute any products suspected of causing dermatitis for a safer alternative. For example many hospitals have stopped using powdered latex gloves and have replaced them with safer gloves. However it is always worth checking whether the substitute is safe or is likely to introduce other health problems.

=> **Trials:** see that all products are properly tested for safety and that new items are initially only purchased on a trial basis so that any adverse reactions can be checked.

=> **Information:** make sure that management keep a complete list of all products in the workplace and warn staff of any hazards. This information should also be available to any staff whose first language is not English.

=> **Handling:** make sure that substances requiring dilution, such as disinfectants are diluted before they are distributed, or provide equipment so that staff can measure accurately the correct quantity of the products themselves.

=> **Control:** control the spread of chemicals and other agents by improving ventilation or enclosing any hazardous processes.

=> **Protective clothing:** if it is not possible to remove or substitute a chemical then make sure staff have personal protection, such as overalls and gloves. However remember that protective clothing should be used as a last resort and that latex gloves and masks are one of the main causes of occupational dermatitis.

=> **Storage:** all products and chemicals known to cause dermatitis must be safely stored in properly labelled containers. They must carry the appropriate hazard warning and give advice on how to neutralise their effects.

=> **Training:** all staff should be trained in the safe handling of workplace substances.

=> **Records:** make sure that any cases of occupational dermatitis are reported in the accident book. Safety reps should will the accident book regularly to see if there are any substances causing dermatitis among their members. In many cases of dermatitis the employer has a legal duty to report it to the Health and Safety Authorities.

=> **Job protection:** UNISON campaigns to try to ensure that any members who become sensitised to any substances used in the workplace and develop allergic contact dermatitis are allowed to change jobs without any loss of seniority or earnings if they so wish.

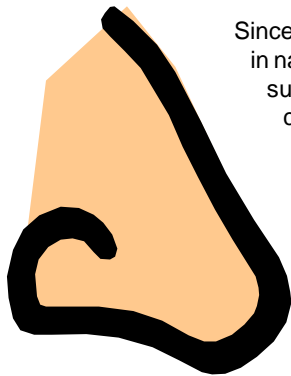
=> **Hygiene:** encourage good hygiene where staff are handling potentially hazardous chemicals. All cuts and wounds should be covered, and hands and forearms should be washed before work.

LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE

Legionnaires disease is a potentially fatal pneumonia caused by Legionella bacteria. Between 200 and 250 cases are reported each year in the UK. It may cause mild or serious illness, possibly leading to permanent weakness or even death, as has been the recent cases in Cumbria and the West Midlands. However, most people who come into contact with the bacteria and develop antibodies do not suffer any symptoms and remain well. It is treated with antibiotics.

The initial symptoms are similar to flu: high temperature, feverishness and chills, coughing, muscle pains, and headache. Occasionally nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea may be experienced and about half of those infected become confused or delirious. If you develop these symptoms and are worried that it might be Legionnaires disease, visit your doctor. Diagnosis is not easy, and you may be asked to take a blood or urine test. If your doctor diagnoses Legionnaires disease and you suspect that you may have got the illness from work, report this to your manager, your health and safety rep, and the occupational health unit.

HOW IS LEGIONNAIRES DISEASE CAUGHT?



Since Legionella bacteria are widespread in the environment and commonly found in natural water courses, they may contaminate and grow in other water systems such as: the cooling towers of air conditioning systems, evaporative condensers, and hot and cold water services. Other potential sources include: humidifiers, spa and whirlpool baths, showers, and ornamental fountains. Contaminated aerosols (small droplets of water suspended in air) from cooling towers, showers etc, may enter the intake of air conditioning systems or spread outside into the surrounding area or into the inside environment of a building. Breathing in the contaminated droplets causes infection. **The disease cannot be passed on from one person to another.**



WHO IS AT RISK?

Everyone is potentially susceptible to infection but some people are at higher risk: those over 45 years of age, smokers, heavy drinkers, those suffering from chronic respiratory or kidney disease, men more than women, and people whose immune system is impaired.

EMPLOYERS DUTIES

All diseases that can be contracted by staff through their work including Legionnaires, are covered by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH). Employers must report any case of Legionnaires that may have been caught at work to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases, and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR). Employers (or persons in control of the workplace premises, such as landlords) are legally required to:

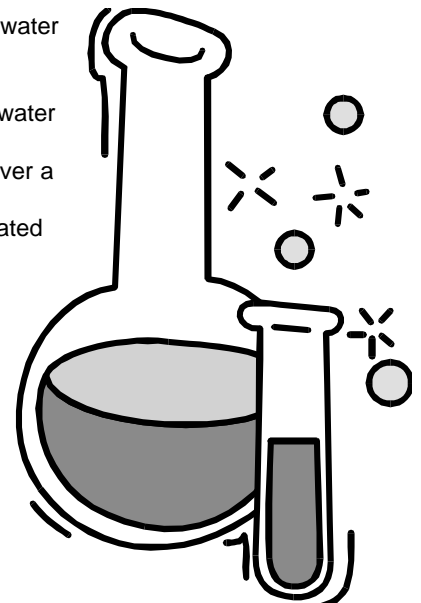
- => Identify and assess sources of risk from Legionnaires,
- => Prepare a course of action (scheme) for preventing or controlling any risk,
- => Implement and manage the scheme - appointing a 'responsible person' to do such,
- => Keep records and check that what has been done is effective.

ASSESSING THE RISK

It is the employer's duty to carry out risk assessments. The employer must find out if the water systems are likely to create a risk:

- => Are conditions present that will encourage bacteria to multiply - for example; is the water temperature between 20 - 45°C?
- => Is it possible that water droplets will be produced, and if so, could they be dispersed over a wide area - for example, showers, or aerosols from cooling towers?
- => Is it likely that anyone particularly susceptible will come into contact with the contaminated water droplets?

If the assessment shows that the risks are insignificant, then the assessment is complete. No further action need be taken other than to review the assessment periodically (at least every 2 years). The assessment must also be reviewed when there has been a change or there is reason to suspect it is no longer valid. For example: a change to or in the use of the plant, water systems, or building; where there is new information about the risks or about new control measures; where checks or routine testing indicates that the control measures may not be working effectively; or where there is a case of Legionnaires.



RSI

Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) is a painful and serious illness that can be stopped at an early stage and can cause permanent disability. Prevention of this injury is better than a disability. RSI can be prevented by employers fitting the job to the person and not the other way round. Ergonomics can be used to assess the person and job. Employers have a legal duty to provide a safe and health work environment. There are still workers who suffer RSI even though it is known about in the work place. Over 200,000 workers suffer this illness each year and the figures increase each year.

RSI affects muscles, tendons and nerves – usually in hands, wrists, elbows, shoulders, knees and feet. Unsafe working practises can increase the risk and repetitive work will aggravate this illness. Working days lost through RSI increase every year and no money can compensate the pain and disability RSI can cause.

Managers need to do effective risk assessments which look at frequency and duration of movements, look at awkward postures, poor work stations, sudden changes in work rate (fast or slow), work stress, vibration, rest breaks.

Common Conditions

- => Tenosynovitis
- => Tendinitis
- => Epicondylitis
- => Bursitis
- => Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

All these involve pain, swelling, tingling pain, numbness, weakness, locking tendons, aching, tenderness, cracking sound in joints – usually wrists. One or two of these conditions may overlap. There are 3 stages:

- => **mild:** pain, tiredness, aching pain
 - => **moderate:** re-occurring pain, physical signs – swelling
 - => **severe:** weakness, fatigue, sleep disturbed, unable to carry out simple tasks.
- This stage can last a short or long time.

What can you do to prevent RSI?

Change your position regularly, take small rest breaks to rest your joints, change your job around to do a variety of tasks, walk around to get circulation moving.

Treatment

The best treatment is rest – how long should be prescribed by a Doctor. Gentle exercise prescribed by the RSI Association can be helpful as can hydrotherapy or ice packs to relieve pain or electrotherapy and ultra-sound prescribed by Physiotherapists, or holistic treatments to relax joints prescribed by Pain Clinics.

Before all this, prevention needs to be taken into account. Remember the old saying “prevention is better than the cure”. These can be assessed by good risk assessments and Health and Safety checks. Fears of not being listened to, feelings of being mardy should be forwarded to Safety Reps, Managers, Safety Advisors, Health and Safety Officers. Worry of being off sick, guilt at colleagues doing your work will not help.



If you have an injury or illness, it needs to be addressed. If you require more information on this issue, please contact Reneen Hopewell, Health and Safety Officer at the Branch Office.

NEW AND EXPECTANT MOTHERS

Pregnancy is not an illness and should be regarded as part of a normal healthy event. Employers have a legal responsibility under the Management of Health and Safety Work Regulations (1994). This was amended by the EU Pregnant Workers Directive, which imposed additional provisions to cover new or expectant mothers (i.e. women who are pregnant, have recently given birth, miscarried or who are breast feeding).

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO WHEN YOU ARE PREGNANT?

Well, inform your manager as soon as you know or think you could be pregnant. If you are planning for a baby, your manager could help you more by protecting you and your child as soon as possible. This isn't the manager being nosey or interfering. In order to protect you and your child as early as they can from any work related hazards, they will need to reconsider any risk assessments that apply to your job.

Under the Health and Safety and Welfare Regulations (1992) provision of rest facilities for pregnant or breast-feeding workers need to be provided. This issue would be incorporated into the revised risk assessment as would back ache, morning sickness, car movements and food smells. There are also regulations protecting night workers who may need different work patterns while they are pregnant. Regular meetings between manager and pregnant worker may be needed to review the risk assessment. Any risk assessment done while you are pregnant may need to be changed slightly when you become a new mother.



Maternity provisions can be found in the County Council's Personnel Orange Book on Section D26 and the Yellow Health and Safety Manual under B24. So be safe, be well and as a UNISON member, you can always contact the Health and Safety Officer if you have any worries or concerns on 07775704484.

Eye Tests and VDUs

Out of 6 million VDU 'users' in the UK, only one in five have exercised their legal right to an eye test paid for by their employers.

WHO IS A 'USER'?

Regulation 1 of the DSE Regulations states that a 'user' is: "an employee who habitually uses... [DSE] as a significant part of his [or her] normal work." A 'user' may work from home. Some 'users' will be obvious. Where they are not obvious, criteria in the Guidance to the Regulations will assist in identifying them. If most or all of the following criteria are met, the employee is a 'user':

- => DSE is necessary for the job, as alternative means are not readily available
- => There is no choice over the use of DSE
- => Significant training and/or specific skills in the use of the DSE are required
- => The employee normally uses DSE for continuous spells of an hour or more at a time
- => DSE is used more or less daily
- => The fast transfer of information between the employee and screen is an important requirement of the job
- => The performance requirements of the system demand high levels of attention and concentration by the user, for example, where the consequence of error may be critical

In practice, if a number of employees use the same DSE, or if use of the equipment is vital for the job, employers will find it easier to designate all employees who use DSE as 'users'. Examples of 'users' given in the Guidance include: secretaries, data input operators, community care workers, librarians, scientists, secretaries, telephone operators, and receptionists.

WHAT IS 'DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT'?

Regulation 1 defines DSE not only as visual display units (VDUs), that is computers, but also microfiche readers, and control screens. It does not include: screens whose main use is to show television or film pictures, window typewriters with just a few lines of text, equipment with a small measurement display such as calculators or cash registers, or portable systems unless they are in prolonged use.

YOUR RIGHT TO AN EYE AND EYESIGHT TEST

Regulation 5 requires employers to provide, on request, an appropriate eye and eyesight test for 'users' or those who will shortly become 'users'. The employer may specify where the test is to be taken, but branches may wish to negotiate for the employer to make a reasonable payment where an individual chooses to go elsewhere. In particular, where an individual has specialist needs the optician chosen by the employer may not be able to carry out the appropriate tests. Individuals who already have a problem should see a specialist with the branch ensuring that the employer meets the cost. All eye and eyesight tests must be:

- => Carried out by a competent person, either a doctor or optician with ophthalmic qualifications
- => Carried out as soon as practicable after being requested where the employee is already a 'user', and where not already a 'user' before the employee becomes a 'user'
- => Without cost to the employee

'Users' should be provided with tests at regular intervals, but cannot be compelled to take one. The optician or doctor will be able to advise how frequently these tests should be. It may vary between individuals. Employers must also provide, on request, tests for users who experience visual difficulties, which may reasonably be considered to be related to DSE work, for example headaches, eyestrain, or difficulty in focussing.

Regulation 7 requires employers to ensure that all DSE 'users' are aware of their right to ask for a free eye test. But note that employees must request eye and eyesight tests. There is no requirement for employers to provide them automatically. UNISON believes that employers should allow paid time off to attend these tests during working hours.

Vision Screening Tests: tests such as 'keystone' tests are not full eyesight tests. Whilst they identify individuals with defective vision who require a full sight test, they do not screen for eye defects, such as injury or disease which have not yet begun to affect vision. They do not fulfil the requirements of the regulations, and 'users' who request a full test must be given one.

THE COST OF GLASSES

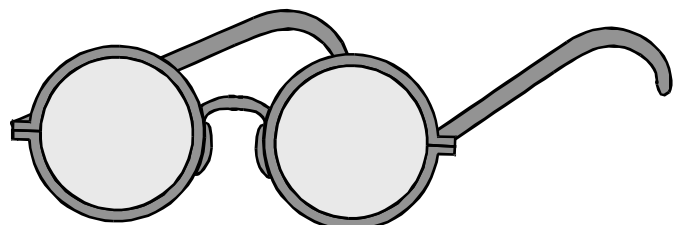
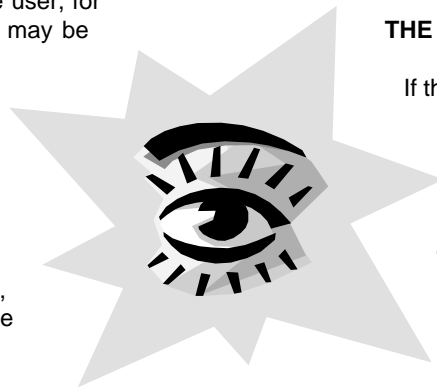
If the test results show that glasses are needed for DSE work, employers must pay the cost of these corrective appliances.

Employers often claim that they only need to make a payment where the glasses are required "solely" for DSE work. This is not in accordance with either the wording or the spirit of the regulations. The regulations also state that the employer need only meet the cost of a basic adequate pair. If 'users' want more expensive pairs or optional treatments,

the employer need only provide a basic pair or it may choose to part pay for a more expensive pair, but only to the value of a basic pair.

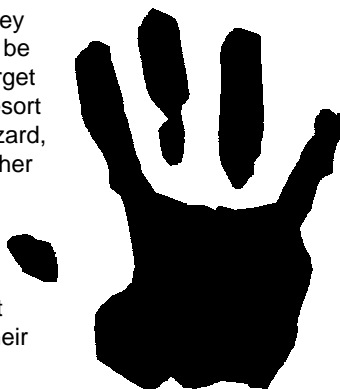
REST BREAKS

Taking regular breaks away from DSE work is also important for relaxing the eyes. Regulation 4 requires employers to plan the activities of 'users' so that their DSE work is periodically interrupted by breaks or changes of activity. The more intensive the work, the more frequently breaks are required. Where possible, 'users' should be allowed to take breaks when they need them. The Guidance to the Regulations says that breaks should be taken before the onset of fatigue, not in order to recuperate, and when performance is at a maximum. Taking breaks should not mean that the same amount of work needs to be done in less time. Short frequent breaks are preferable to longer occasional breaks, and if possible they should be taken away from the screen. Studies seem to suggest that changes of work activity, rather than formal rest breaks are more effective in relieving eyestrain.



GLOVES

Gloves are a form of personal protective equipment. They should therefore be provided free of charge, and must be suitable for their purpose. However what a lot of people forget is that Protective Equipment should be used only as a last resort and only after the employer has looked at removing the hazard, substitution (i.e. replacing it with a safer alternative), and other methods of control. Only after all of these have been considered and implemented should gloves be considered. In practice gloves can be a very useful piece of safety equipment where work involves sharp objects, chemical or biological hazards, wet, cold or hot work. Unfortunately many gloves are inappropriate for their purpose, and some introduce new hazards.



THE CORRECT GLOVE

Gloves should be the right size and the right type for the work involved. There are thousands of different gloves on the market. The list below covers a few of the main types:

=> **Disposable latex gloves** are often used by nurses, laboratory workers, and first aiders. They are made from natural rubber and are a major cause of allergic contact dermatitis. The allergy is triggered by a protein in the latex. Someone can use these gloves for years and then suddenly develop an allergy. This means that they could then get a reaction whenever they touch rubber. In extreme cases, the person can react so strongly that they fall unconscious. High quality gloves are processed to reduce the levels of protein. Cheaper gloves are usually a greater danger. Manufacturers should be asked to give information on the levels of free protein in their products.

=> **Powdered latex gloves** are by far the most dangerous. They contain corn starch that binds to the protein making it more easily absorbed. Also the dust, if breathed in, can cause asthma. UNISON believes that these gloves should never be used.

=> **Disposable latex gloves** should only be used as a temporary barrier against infection as oils and solvents quickly weaken them. They also puncture easily.

=> **Flock lined rubber gloves** are fine if used with detergents or water for cleaning. If mild solvents are used then nitrile rubber should be used.

=> **Cotton lined PVC gloves** are used as protection against splinters, sharp edges, and wet objects. They are used in some refuse collection, grounds maintenance, and amenity horticulture work. They do not give sufficient protection against sharps, where stronger gloves are needed

=> **Viton rubber gloves** are often used when dealing with solvents. However they are not intended for general use when handling these chemicals, and are for splash protection only.

=> **Specialist gloves**. There are a variety available, including chain mail gloves, polyurethane, and cushioned gloves. These usually have a very particular role, such as preventing static, or reducing the effects of vibration. However, if any of them are being used, the risk assessment process should be used to see if the hazard could be removed, substituted, or controlled by other means beforehand.

FAILURE

Gloves fail for a variety of reasons. One of the other reasons gloves fail is that people are not told how to use them. Few employers will provide training in correct technique, despite it being a legal requirement. This means that gloves are often taken off, cleaned, or stored incorrectly, so that the skin can become contaminated or the hazard can get inside the glove. In addition, gloves are often used for the wrong purpose.

Pinprick holes are quite common in all latex gloves. Simply blowing a glove up will not necessarily show that the glove is damaged enough to let in a virus. This is why gloves alone are not sufficient protection. Oil-based substances and hydrocarbon solvents weaken latex very quickly. This damage cannot be seen, and so unsuitable gloves will give a false sense of security. Many chemicals can actually work their way through a glove by permeation. Lined gloves may seem safer, but these are usually made by dipping a cotton glove in rubber or PVC. This means the coating is uneven and, on occasion, the fibres may show up on the surface of the glove making it useless as a barrier to chemicals. Separate cotton linings worn underneath the glove are a much better idea, so long as they are changed regularly.

So if you have to wear gloves make sure that they are the right ones for the job and replace them when necessary.

2003 diaries and year planners

It's time to order your UNISON diaries for 2003. There are three styles to choose from: Two pocket-sized diaries in slimline and compact styles, costing £1.60 each, and an A5 size week to view diary (for desk, briefcase etc) at £2.75.

There is a donation of 10p per diary for the welfare fund that we hope will raise in excess of £20,000. All diaries carry the UNISON logo. They are well produced, extremely good value for money and packed with useful information about the union. The diary will reflect the fact that 2003 is UNISON's tenth anniversary. A wallchart year planner will also be produced for 2003. It is good quality and an excellent way of publicising UNISON all year round. These cost £5 for five. All can be ordered via the branch office on the form below. Orders need to be at the Branch office by the end of October.

Please send me:

Slimline pocket diaries: _____ @ £1.60 each = £_____ Compact pocket diaries: _____ @ £1.60 each = £_____

A5 week to view diaries: _____ @ £2.75 each = £_____ Wall planners: _____ @ £5 for 5 = £_____

Total cost = £_____

Name: _____ Address: _____

Tel: _____

Post this form and your cheque (payable to Nottinghamshire County UNISON) to:
Nottinghamshire UNISON, 39-41 Loughborough Road, West Bridgford, Notts NG2 7LJ

Application for Membership - Notts UNISON

I apply to join UNISON and agree to pay the appropriate subscription, to comply with the rules and constitution, as in the UNISON rule book.

BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss): Surname: Forename:

Payroll No.: ES(establishment code): N.I. No.: Scale/Grade :

	Subscriptions				
	ANNUAL PAY	Weekly/Monthly	SUBS	Tick box	
Home address :	up to £2000	£0.42	£1.81	BAND A1	[]
Home Post Code:	£2000-£5000	£0.90	£3.90	BAND A2	[]
Home Tel :	£5001-£7000	£1.23	£5.34	BAND B	[]
Department :	£7001-£10000	£1.52	£6.59	BAND C	[]
Employer :	£10001-£15000	£1.80	£7.78	BAND D	[]
Work address :	£15001-£20000	£2.21	£9.57	BAND E	[]
:	£20001-£25000	£3.13	£13.57	BAND F	[]
:	£25000+	£3.88	£16.81	BAND G	[]
Work Post Code :	Retired Members £15(Life) Students £10pa Unemployed £4pa				
Work Tel :	Job Title:				

Conditions of Service:(Tick all those boxes that are appropriate to you and your post.)

Full Time	Part Time	Term Time Only	Job Share	Permanent	Temporary
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*CAR ALLOWANCE:

*DISABILITY

Essential	Casual	None	Yes	No
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*ETHNIC ORIGIN:

Afro-carib	African	Indian	Pakistani	OtherAsian	White Euro	Other
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* This information is entirely voluntary, however it will help the branch ensure that minority groups are kept informed of any National or Local events that might effect them. Any information provided will be completely confidential.

POLITICAL FUND

I authorise the deduction of the following Political Fund payments part of my subscription.

Delete where appropriate.

Affiliated Fund / General Fund

Affiliated Political Fund (your subscription includes 6.5% contribution to this fund) campaigns for members through affiliation to the Labour Party both locally and nationally. Those paying the affiliated levy can take part in the APF activities and make their contribution on policy issues, including Labour Party policy.

General Political Fund (your subscription includes 5p a week or 22p per month contribution to this fund) is independent of support for any Political Party but liases with MP's from all Party's to pursue UNISON's interests. It is used to pay for campaigning at branch, regional and national levels of the

YOU MUST INDICATE AT LEAST ONE OPTION
as the NEC will automatically allocate you to the
APF if this section is left blank.

AUTHORISATION FOR DEDUCTION OF SUBSCRIPTION

I hereby authorise the deduction from my salary, for payment to UNISON on my behalf, of the subscription appropriate to my annual earnings.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

OFFICE USE ONLY

Actioned by Branch Office: LAF 02305

Allocated to Branch: NOTTS COUNTY

Please return your completed application form to:
**NOTTS UNISON, FREEPOST,
NOTTINGHAM, NG2 1BR**

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION IN PUBLIC SERVICES

While the County Council awards an extra 5% to top managers to deal with a claimed recruitment and retention problem, UNISON nationally has called on the government to address recruitment and retention crisis in public services for **all** staff.

General Secretary Dave Prentis attacked the government's notion that "private is better" is contributing to a negative public image of public services. He stated that "Public service workers want to make a difference. But they are made to feel they are not valued when the government insists that 'private is better' and hands over control of vital health, education and local government services to private companies.

"The Audit Commission's report supports UNISON findings that recruitment and retention difficulties and staff turnover in public services are growing. We need to work on ways of engaging, valuing and supporting staff.

"And pay does matter. It may not be the only reason a person joins or leaves public service but it is the barometer by which they judge their worth. Large numbers of low paid public service workers do not earn enough to live on. Pay may not be everything, but below a certain level, no amount of job satisfaction is enough to keep someone in a job."

Notts UNISON Branch Communications Officer Bob Watt joined the attack by adding: "it is ironic that it is the Audit Commission who are saying that over regulation and paperwork are one of the major causes of frustration for Council workers.

"It is their inspection regimes for Best Value and other central government controls that are behind many of the regulations and paperwork. Perhaps they will recognise the damage that has been done by privatisations under the guise of Best Value."

He went on to point out that "the Audit Commission have regularly espoused the virtues of using the private sector as a means of improving public services. Yet UNISON members are all too familiar with the reality: wages, terms & conditions and hours cut by private companies to make a profit for shareholders at the expense of the service and our members".

PENSIONS: WHAT NEXT?

Whoever said pensions are "boring" hasn't been reading the papers lately. With steel workers striking to protect their pensions and private companies rushing to close final salary schemes, pensions are getting off the financial pages and into the news. And now Local Government workers could face a significant reduction in pension benefits if they are moved to a scheme based on career average earnings. The career average proposal is part of a government discussion paper on the Local Government Pension Scheme.

While UNISON nationally welcomes the opportunity to discuss the future structure of the scheme, the union is seriously concerned that a move to a career average would lead to a pensions crisis in local government. At UNISON's HQ in London, head of pensions, Glyn Jenkins, said:

"The possibility of moving from a scheme that bases benefit on final pensionable salary to a scheme based on career average runs the risk of a significant reduction of final benefit for many members. The scheme already has protections for part-time employees and that is why so many have joined the scheme when they were allowed to."

He added that far from being a 'gold standard' the Local Government Pension Scheme is in fact a minimum standard for staff to avoid poverty in retirement. UNISON is also concerned that there may be a need to increase employee contributions. For many local government staff, five and six per cent contributions are a struggle. Increasing this for new employees would lead to many simply leaving the scheme.

Glyn added that the proposals still discriminate against unmarried partners: "It is particularly disappointing that the announcement, while suggesting ways to increase flexibility for the scheme, appears to reinforce government inflexibility in dealing with the removal of discrimination against unmarried partners and some widows. Savings gained because fewer people are marrying mean the cost to remove the discrimination against unmarried partners is so small when offset against the savings that it would not increase employer contribution rates. Allowing retrospection would remove the discrimination against widows who married scheme members after retirement."

UNISON AT THE TUC: Pride in public services

UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis put privatisation and public services center-stage at the Trades Union Congress with a hard hitting speech expressing pride in the public service ethos. Delegates in Blackpool showed the strength of their feelings on the issue following Tony's Blair's low-key speech the day before.

Prentis said he felt anger: "After all the lean and nasty Tory years when our members struggled to keep public services going, it is the private sector which is now reaping the benefit of extra investment."

Delegates backed a composite motion, proposed by UNISON, which included calls for an end to PFI and PPP, a probe into the 'big four' accountancy firms which set up PFI deals, exposure of private healthcare company failures, an end to outsourcing education services and more action to end the two-tier workforce. To repeated applause Prentis saluted those who had taken action, from all trade unions, in July's national local government strike.

"If ever I needed a boost, it came on 17th July when 750,000 local government workers took strike action. I was proud of UNISON members and T&G and GMB members standing shoulder to shoulder and of the massive public support they got. It was the outpouring of a workforce, sick of being undervalued, tired of pay cuts and privatisation, tired of being sold off to the lowest bidder, tired of PFI or strategic partnerships or whatever new title is dreamed up to describe privatisation, plain and simple."

Prentis promised a continuing campaign to promote excellence in public service and which put users and the people who provide them first. There was prolonged applause for his message to government to stand shoulder to shoulder with public service workers:

"Have confidence in them, have faith in them, treat them fairly and they will deliver."