

LAMBETH UNISON

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

2022



Welcome to the Lambeth UNISON AGM booklet!

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Nominations for branch officers

Chair

Ruth Cashman

Vice Chair

Samuel Kamara and Dan Jeffery

Joint Secretaries

Simon Hannah & Jocelyn Cruywagen

Assistant Secretary

Roger Lewis

Treasurer

Eleesha Smith

Returning Officer

Paul Fitzgerald

Health & Safety

James Delaney (for Lambeth College)
Presley Rebelo (For Lambeth Council)

Joint Equality Officers

Anita Bey & Hassina Malik

Membership Officer

Erin Healy

International Officer

Alex Jackson

Stewards

Amanda Anderson
Jeremy Drinkall
Eleesha Smith
Andy Tullis
Michelle Woon
Martha Levi Smythe
Sonja Baralic
Ruth Cashman
Simon Hannah
Andy Tullis
Jackie Lewis
Alan Barnes
Edward Abassah

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Lambeth UNISON has 2,057 members made up of 1,732 full members and 322 retired members. This is an overall decrease of 9 members since our last AGM.

	2019	2020	2021
All	2013	2134	2066
Black*	552	619	646
Female*	1319	1384	1360
Male*	682	723	633
Disabled*	n/a	56	59
Young	29	38	37
Retired	405	412	325

*self-identifying characteristic based on whether we have been informed

Our membership also includes:

- 25 young members
- 651 black members*
- 68 disabled members*
- 1341 female members*
- 656 male members*

A comparison against previous years:

We represent members across 196 employers including 112 with only one member. Our largest employer is Lambeth Council and the remainder of our membership is in schools, day centres, nurseries, and outsourced services.

Our largest non-school employers are:

Employer	Number of members
L B Lambeth	1189
South Bank Colleges	53
Excelcare	25
Ofsted	17
Pinnacle PSG	15
Greenwich Leisure Limited	12

Our largest schools employers are:

Employer	Number of members
The Dunraven Educational Trust	34
Wyvil Primary School	11

Finance and Budget

This years budget we propose to have some overspend to use up some of our reserves. The expenditure will primarily be on wages for the private sector organisers for the first half of the year. Using up some of our reserves will mean that we increase the amount of monthly income from UNISON as at the moment we have so much in our bank account that we are capped for how much our monthly budget is from the union.

The good news is that we will see a slight increase income regardless due to changes in the way that the branches resources are cal-

culated as part of the national unions commitment to rebalancing finances away from central office and towards the branches doing the work on the ground.

After two years of mostly online conferences and meetings this year the annual conference and the local government conference will be in Brighton which will mean expenditure on hotel rooms and food for the first time in a few years!

Other than that the rest of the budget remains similar to last year though we hope to spend more on local campaigns as COVID restrictions lift and we can get back out into the world and more UNISON members return to the office.

Incoming for 2022

Type	Group	Total	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Receipts	Funding	63962.45	5330.21	5330.21	5330.21	5330.21	5330.21	5330.21	5330.2	5330.2	5330.2	5330.2	5330.2	5330.2
Receipts	Local Activities	200	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.66	16.66	16.66
Receipts	Total	64162.45	5346.88	5346.88	5346.88	5346.88	5346.88	5346.87	5346.87	5346.87	5346.87	5346.86	5346.86	5346.86

Budget expenditure for 2022

StaffingBES	41926	5,525.47	5,525.47	5,525.47	5,525.47	5,525.47	5,525.47	5,525.47	3493.84	3493.84	3493.82	3493.82	3493.82	3493.82
Administration	304	25.34	25.34	25.34	25.34	25.34	25.34	25.34	25.34	25.34	25.32	25.32	25.32	25.32
Participation_National	7140	0	0	0	0	0	0	7140	0	0	0	0	0	0
Campaigns	200	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.66	16.66	16.66	16.66
Communications	50	4.17	4.17	4.17	4.17	4.17	4.17	4.17	4.17	4.17	4.16	4.16	4.16	4.16
Donations	200	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.66	16.66	16.66	16.66
Affiliations	600	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Local Activities	820.74	68.42	68.42	68.42	68.42	68.42	68.39	68.39	68.39	68.39	68.38	68.38	68.37	68.37
Total	51240.7	5706.74	5706.74	5706.74	5706.74	5706.74	5706.74	12846.7	3675.08	3675.08	3675	3675	3674.99	3674.99
Surplus/Deficit	12921.7	-359.86	-359.86	-359.86	-359.86	-359.86	-359.86	-7499.8	1671.79	1671.79	1671.86	1671.86	1671.87	1671.87

Branch Secretary Report

The last year was one that was still dominated by COVID and ensuring adequate precautions were taken around workers health and safety. It meant a lot of meetings over risk assessments and working with Lambeth Council HR and Public Health to get the policies right for staff.

Pay Campaign

In response to the derisory 1.75% pay offer UNISON balloted its 375,000 members in Local Government for strike action to demand more. The anti union laws in Britain require the unions to reach a 50% turn out to be able to take action but we fell well short, only 12% voted (though with a 70% yes vote). This means that UNISON will accept the 1.75% pay offer, back dated to April 2021.

The low turn out poses a very serious problem for UNISON—in local government we have a national pay bargaining unit which determines wages, but if we cannot get close to calling strike action then we lack any industrial muscle to force higher wages.

In the context of 6% inflation that is likely to continue through 2022 (and might escalate even more in energy bills due to the war on Ukraine) such small pay awards mean year on year cuts to our pay.

As a union we need to discuss a new strategy for how to mount our pay campaigns, including disaggregating the ballots so we vote employer by employer.

In Lambeth we mounted a serious phone banking operation to encourage members to vote—a massive thank you to everyone who helped. We got a 33% turn out with an 86% yes vote which was one of the best in London. But we have to build up a stronger base of stewards across the organisation to encourage an even higher turn out for action in the future. We have to be clear that in an industrial bal-

lot not voting means voting for a pay cut.

Resident Services and Housing

We haven't had a convenor for Resident Services and Housing for the whole of last year since we lost Eamon Maguire and Hassina Malik got another role at the Council. Branch secretaries have been covering these two areas but we will work out a new more formal arrangement for convenors post AGM.

One thing that is crucial is having more stewards across the Council but in particular in these two areas.

In Housing there are concerns over the HRA overspend and what that might mean for jobs losses in restructures over the next year. We have had verbal assurances that no job losses will happen but only time will tell.

Insourcing

It is Lambeth UNISON policy to campaign for and support insourcing of local council services so we are pleased that the Direct Labour Organisation (Community Works) has been formed, that the tree service has been brought in-house and the leisure centres run by GLL are now very likely to be brought back in-house. The Carnegie Library that was the site of such a huge community and trade union struggle in 2016 has now defector been handed back to the Council by GLL which we predicted all those years ago!

Private sector organisers

We hired two private sector organisers Rob and Tracy to help us recruit more members across the private sector organisations that we organise. These include a lot of care homes, an industrial laundry, security services and so on. Although overall membership has not significantly improved in these are-

as yet it has remained steady and a number of new activists have been identified who are going to become stewards in their workplaces which is excellent news.

Homeworking

Since the end of Covid restrictions we have still seen most Council workers working at home for the majority of their week.

From the bosses' point of view, homeworking saves costs on offices. And there is evidence that it results in a rise in productivity. From the workers' point of view, homeworking saves the time and cost of commuting, makes it easier to balance work with home demands such as child-care, benefits disabled workers and may enable a more flexible choice of when to work.

The most likely form of working from home to be offered to established workers is a mixture of home and office working, say two or three days a week at home. This makes it possible for fewer workers to be in an office at one time while maintaining throughput by means of staggered shifts in order to physically distance.

There are however serious problems with it. There are the dangers of isolation, socially and from workmates who can help or provide support with the job or discuss work issues. Some evidence shows that homework in the pandemic has led to increased work beyond agreed hours. The blurring of boundaries between work and home makes it easier to be expected to be available at any time and for women to be expected to perform domestic labour alongside working. Plus, not every home provides a suitable space for work and it may be the environment for abuse or bad mental health, as the lockdown has shown.

Broadly, our approach is to ensure that homeworking benefits the worker. Most basic to that is the individual worker's right to choose whether to work from home and how to divide time

between home and office; and unions' right to bargain about and control the location of work. We also ensure to remind management of all the workers who have no choice but to work in the community or council buildings and make sure they are not forgotten.

Working from home makes union organisation more difficult. Both in terms of regular contact with stewards and the feeling of a workplace collectivity and decision making. In the next year we will be using a hybrid of old fashioned workplace based activity and online meetings and mailouts to try and build a stronger branch under the new conditions.

A good time to fight

The government has been making frequent u-turns since early 2020. It is a government with little solid strategy beyond its December 2019 election slogan, "Get Brexit done". Even that is not "done" yet. The cost of living crisis will damage an already unpopular government. Recent polls show a slight Labour lead. Though unions and workers have had a number of knocks, conditions are right for a fightback. We must all play our part.

Changes to the Branch Leadership

We'd like to take this opportunity to say thank you to Gary Whiting who has been our Chair and has decided to step down. It will be a tough act to follow, few people have what it takes to keep control in a Lambeth UNISON meeting! From next year Jocelyn Cruywagen will be joining the Branch Secretary team to replace Ruth and we know she is going to do a great job.

Adults and Health report

The first months of 2021 saw an increase in A+H staff unable to work due to illness or needing to self-isolate due to Covid-19, at the same time as a rise in demand on adult services. Management therefore put contingency plans in place for a reduction in the available workforce, which included seeing which members of staff would be available and willing to support areas of the service that were likely to be under the most pressure, in particular the hospital teams and duty service.

Unsurprisingly, a great deal of the work during the year has been around risk assessments and working arrangements, and advising/supporting individual members, including members with Long Covid. The A&H overarching workforce risk assessment, which covers all workers in A+H except for those based in day centres, has been regularly reviewed. The most recent version was completed in December and is currently being reviewed. Each time it is revised, the final version is circulated to staff in the staff bulletin with an invitation to staff to make comments. The detailed workplace and workforce risk assessments for Lambeth's two day centres are reviewed every month.

A significant number of A+H staff are based in hospitals and other buildings managed by various NHS and other bodies. We therefore asked management to obtain the building risk assessments for those buildings and we review and comment on them as they are received.

Vaccination as a condition of deployment (VCOD)

In July, the government passed legislation to make it a legal requirement for all staff working in, or going into, care homes registered with the Care Quality Commission to be fully Covid-19 vaccinated, unless they had a medical exemption, with effect from 11th November. At the beginning of September, Corporate HR sent an email to almost everyone in

A+H telling them that the Council needed to see proof that they had been vaccinated or that they were exempt in order to comply with the new regulations.

UNISON, GMB and Unite strongly objected to this email. The 'requirement' stated in the email was invalid and not legally justifiable, and the direction given on providing evidence of vaccination status was in breach of data protection legislation. The legislation did NOT require local authorities to obtain proof of vaccination from council staff. What it required was that care home managers did not allow anyone into a care home without seeing proof of vaccination or proof of exemption. This meant that a member of Lambeth staff, eg a social worker, going to a care home would have to show proof of their vaccination status to the care home manager. The council would not therefore be able to use any 'proof of vaccination' given to the council for the purpose that it told staff that it required it for.

In addition, vaccination status is highly sensitive personal data, and data protection legislation therefore requires that individuals are informed about what such data will be used for, how it will be processed and stored, and who will be able to access that information. The email sent to staff did not do that, so it was in breach of data protection legislation.

After several twists and turns, and following constructive discussions with ASC management, it was agreed that a field would be set up on Oracle, with very restricted access, for staff to say whether they had been vaccinated or were medically exempt. It was also agreed that the relevant managers would be asked to give senior management the numbers (not the names) of staff reporting to them in various 'vaccine status' categories. Many managers would already have been aware of the vaccine status of the staff they manage as it would have been discussed during supervision, in a one to one, or when completing or updating an individual risk assessment.

Then the government said it would be extending its vaccination requirement to cover all service areas that are regulated by the CQC with effect from 3 April, meaning a 3 February deadline for the first dose. However, on 31 January the government announced that it intended to revoke the regulations making vaccination a condition of deployment (VCOD) in health and social care settings. Before this announcement, HR sent us a draft communication to go to staff asking them to put information about their vaccine or medically exempt status onto a restricted access field on Oracle. We are seeking clarification as to whether they still wish to do this.

Reorganisations

In February, Lambeth Walk Day Centre moved to a new building in Coburg Crescent. The building and other services provided from it are to be managed by Certitude, but day service staff remain Lambeth employees. The main issues discussed were around the (multi agency) management arrangements for the new centre.

The reorganisation of Intermediate Care Lambeth (ICL) involved the non-medical but urgent health and social care functions provided by the Urgent Response team within ICL being moved to join with the urgent medical response service provided by the GSTT @home service. This involved 1 Practice Manager and 5 SW/Assessor posts moving into the new @home service. Staff preferences and vacant posts were used to identify staff to work in @home.

Other reorganisations have included Initial Contact / Front Door Re-design and setting up a single Community Duty team. Consultation on a restructure of Safeguarding and Quality is due to begin in March.

Assessors

In December, we started work with UNISON members who are assessors on preparing a case for a review of their job description, which dates from

the 'End to End' reorganisation of adult social care in 2014. We are now working on this with the GMB.

Recruitment and retention allowances

As I write, we have just received a management proposal for the introduction of recruitment and retention allowances for Adults social workers and occupational therapists, which we will be discussing with GMB and UNITE in the next week or so.

Jackie Lewis,
Convenor

Finance & Investment

The last 12 months has been challenging in public services. The global pandemic, covid 19 has brought many challenges and difficulties and changed the way we work, live, and socialise. Unfortunately, many have lost their lives and have become very sick and have lost jobs. Mandates were required for working in the social care and medical field, and many in general have concerns for the future and job security regardless of their personal or religious choices/values.

Since 2020, there has been an increase in cases which many are (stress related sickness) suffering from isolation and mental health issues, which a lot has to do with sudden change and how we function professionally and in our personal lives.

We continue to work from home full time, most meetings are conducted via Teams.

We continue to see cuts and restructures in the council and from the restructure forward plan we can anticipate upcoming cuts/restructures for 2022.

There have been further changes to pensions and retirement and the public sector exit payments cap (95k) was signed into law in November 2020. There were several online forums and workshops with

members of staff in the directorate on pensions matter and material released from unison.com.

The discussion around Black Lives Matter, institutional racism/ anti-racism continues to be of discussion, and we have seen the injustice with deportation, stop and search and police brutality.

The BWG continued the discussion around Patrick Vernon's report, supporting other local authority unison activists and members within public services.

We have continued to have branch committee meetings monthly and monthly strategic meetings with relevant senior management board.

Plans for the year ahead is to continue to support our members and grow our membership, support local campaigns, continue the fight for equality and support the anti-racism movement, working closely with the reps in my area and supporting other directorates.

Eleesha Smith

Convenor

Children's Services

*One two three four,
If I had ever been here before,
I would probably know just what to do,
Don't you?
(Deja' Vu. Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young -1970)*

Two years since the Covid – 19 pandemic and what has changed for local government and schools' workers under this Tory government?

Despite being the people who have kept the country running, kept vulnerable children safe and educated, the strain of over-work and risings cost of living is taking its toll. It feels more like levelling downwards. The pandemic has exploded the myth that SW's and Social Care practitioners can't possibly work from home, but the real battle has been to keep staff safe and resist the blanket drive back into the workplaces. Despite a measured Lambeth policy on paper, there have been too many cases of local managers demanding workers return to offices where it is not necessary even when they are clinically vulnerable.

The governments line since January, mid-way through the Omicron-variant surge, has been to end all restrictions and let us, the public, get on with it whatever the risk. Although the vaccination programme has reached millions, evidence shows people can still get Covid 19 and still be reinfected, so we are by no means over the pandemic. All through the crisis UNISON have held the council to account over risk assessments, Occupational Health assessments, return to work measures both at senior and individu-

al team level.

UNISON have fought mandatory vaccination of workers in the public sector, which the government have U-turned on in the NHS. Whatever the government policy, or lack of it, we must demand our employers consult us, maintain sensible measures, allow WFH, continue to provide PPE and risk assess all areas of work including schools.

Schools (also see school convenors report):

As above we have been holding the school employers to account over staff Health & Safety including private contractors and academies. A central demand of our movement must be proper funding for installing ventilation systems and allowing wearing of masks and appropriate measures.

This time last year we were locked in battle over dozens of school restructures (see last years report) where we fought hard to save many jobs. Make no mistake the next wave of restructures is coming as schools continue to face budget deficits due to falling pupil numbers, underfunding and sometimes historic financial mismanagement. As ever it's the support staff who deliver education who bear the brunt of cuts, downgrading and redundancies. Why should the people who didn't cause the problems suffer the most pain, last year we had several successful ballots for strike action and will do so again if our members jobs and pay are threatened.

Children's Social Care:

Sorry if this AGM report seems a bit deja-

'vu, but while in the strange "old-new normal" that was 2021 major cuts restructures were delayed, the same old problems continued under the surface.

The Ofsted visit in 2021 rightly praised our 'front door' services that keep children safe but it's clear some teams face a recruitment crisis and extra cases are taken up by SW's even at the risk of burnout. Unmanageable workloads, high caseloads, stress, bullying and micro-management continue to be reported to UNISON.

There has been a wave of resignations at the senior leadership level starting with the former Director raising concerns about instability and continuity.

Then there was the fallout of the terrible murder of six year old Arthur Labinjo-Hughes in Solihull, and Star Hobson the sixteen-month-old girl murdered in Bradford, where all children's services have now been put out to a Trust. UNISON's [manifesto for social workers](#) promotes the positive image of SW's and our Professional Services Unit represents individual employee's under SWE investigation (where we have an excellent success rate).

NAAS scrapped by the DfE at last, UNISON's campaigning pays off.

Since being introduced in 2018 just over 5% of the children's statutory workforce have been assessed yet the scheme has cost the public purse over £24m. The universally unpopular scheme clearly collapsed due to lack of interest or buy in from partner agencies. UNISON has been to the forefront of campaigning and lobbying against NAAS and our

work has finally paid off, another unnecessary burden on SW's has been lifted.

Even without a continuing Covid threat or new variants 2022 means more uncertainty for workers as capitalist governments and the bosses try to claw back their profit margins, but the pandemic has exposed the fragility of the world capitalist system and its inherent inequality. BBC 2's "The Year the Rich Won" (first aired 25th Jan) was a sickening indictment of how governments help the rich get richer even in times of severe economic crisis. As workers face rising cost of living, rising energy bills and inflation it's clear we cannot go on like this, the real impact of the crisis is only just kicking in. We must begin building for our 2023 pay claim now with a fighting strategy from top -to-bottom to win!

Johnson has been utterly discredited but Starmer's Labour offers no real alternative, shadow chancellor Racheal Reeves has stated that Labour is now a proudly pro-business party following the removal of Corbyn. So if elected Labour will eventually resort to further budget cuts in Local Government expenditure and public services (London councils still face a £400 million funding shortfall in 2022). Haven't we been here before? Trade Unions like the Bakers Union, Unite and the RMT have resolved to back independent socialist candidates that support Union policy in the May elections and beyond, new political representation is coming. My thanks to all children's services members, my shop stewards and branch comrades for all their support and hard work in

2021. Repeat mode has ended but things won't just reset to the old normal, we must now press fast-forward to the new era where workers interests come first!

Farewell Ronnie Spector RIP; and thank you for the music.

Andy Tullis

Convenor

UNISON Black Workers Group

It is my privilege to write about our Black workers group activities over the past year or so. We had several online meetings since the pandemic hit us all. We had a successful AGM in October 2021 attended by our members. Our campaigns and what we are about were put together in a beautiful slide show.

It is disheartening sad that members continue to consistently report micro management, bullying, work overload, victimisation and harassment in the work place. We have had to push back as Black minority ethnic staff. 'It is our bread and butter' to fight for equality. There is not a day that goes by that I think and know that equality and fairness is a demand in the work place and in society.

This is YOUR views: (BWG organising meetings held in 2020/2021)

Black minority ethnic staff's experiences of discrimination:

There remain fears of challenging racism. This fear is based on the repercussions and re-priming. Staff who challenge perceived racism describe experiences of refusal of jobs opportunities, isolation within teams, increased micro management and micro aggression from colleagues and managers. Black minority and ethnic staff believe they continue to be overlooked for promotions. Black minority staff continue to feel they are micro managed compared to

white colleagues. White managers operate a nepotistic employment process that favours their white family and friends. Black minority staff are afraid of raising issues of safety re COVID19 because of re-priming from managers.

Training needs:

Unconscious bias training is insufficient and useless when the actual problem is conscious bias and open racism. Overwhelming demands for mandatory anti-racism training for ALL staff. This would assist also Black minority ethnic managers who treat white staff more favourably than Black minority staff because they believe that this will win them favour with their white superiors. Also 'white fragility' training is needed to help white colleagues understand why they may be experiencing reluctance to accept the experiences of black and Black Minority Ethnic colleagues.

Accountability and independence of HR:

There is an overwhelming mistrust of HR and the way HR officers support managers to use the system to discriminate against Black staff. HR staff are overruled by managers and are themselves often afraid of repercussions for appropriately and accurately applying policies.

It is now imperative that HR must demonstrate impartiality, must underpin employment law, be representative, are properly trained on policies, proce-

dures and employment law or else the grievances procedures are meaningless and pointless.

All interview panels should have a member of the trade unions and/or another independent person. This is to ensure that hiring managers do not simply employ their favoured candidate. For real change HR must change. The first step should be for external training for all HR teams to ensure they see themselves as guardians of policies, procedures and employment law. They do not currently appear to have the expertise to deal with advising staff or managers properly as they do not have a firm knowledge of policies and procedures.

UNISON Black Workers 6 demands

1. Reports and recommendations of previous institutional racism enquiries should be posted on the councils website
2. The reinstatement of Members Appeals for Grievances and Disciplinary appeals.
3. The reinstatement of Race Equalities unit / Independent referral unit for staff facing discrimination.
4. Establish a sub-committee that includes representatives from the unions & senior management. That this sub-committee should convene within one month of the meeting. The meeting should combine the various recommendations from the unions, the Patrick Vernon investigation, agree an implementation plan and be responsible to ensure its implementation. The sub-committee will report to the regular quarterly Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
5. Reinstate the independent functions of HR.
6. All members Trade Unions self-organised groups be allocated 2 hours paid time per month for members covering the 9 protected characteristics as internal self-organised groups

Why become active in Lambeth UNISON Black workers group:

Over the past 5 years (and long before) Lambeth Unison Black Workers Group have led on the battle

for equality and for recognition of institutional racism in Lambeth. Many of the gains for Black Workers is due to the work done by members of the Black Workers Group.

We demanded an external investigation of staff claims of racism and won!

We campaigned for a Council statement on institutional racism and won!

We pushed for an increase in the Black leadership of the Council and won!

We pushed for training courses targeted at Black staff and won!

And so much more.

Get involved to root out Racism in the workplace.

Solidarity, the struggle continues.

Jocelyn Cruywagen

Black workers convenor.