

## LGR Update

The eight councils in North Yorkshire have started working together in preparation for local government reorganisation. We are taking the same approach within UNISON, and the five local government branches in North Yorkshire (our branch, plus Craven, Harrogate, Ryedale and Scarborough) are meeting regularly. We have also agreed to produce a joint newsletter for local government members, which will be sent out and as when we have updates for members. This will make sure that all UNISON members receive the same news.

In terms of next steps, we are awaiting the formal Order to be approved by Parliament around December or January. Once the Order is approved the next step will be the elections to the new Council. These will happen in May next year. Once elected, the new councillors will set the policy direction for the new council.

Visit our website for all the latest news and updates about LGR: [www.northyorks-unison.org.uk/lgr](http://www.northyorks-unison.org.uk/lgr).

## Record jump in inflation

Inflation jumped from 2% CPI (consumer prices index) in July to 3.2% in August – the largest single month rise since records began in 1997 according to the ONS. This takes it well above the Bank of England's 2% inflation target. RPI (retail prices index) inflation jumped from 3.8% to 4.8%.

CPIH, the consumer prices index including owner occupiers' housing costs, rose by 3% in the 12 months to August 2021, the largest increase since figures began in 2006. "However," the ONS said, "this is likely to be a temporary change". It said that the change is largely because of discounted restaurant and café prices in August 2020 during the Eat Out to Help Out scheme and, to a lesser extent, reductions in VAT across the same sector. The largest upward contribution to the CPIH 12-month inflation rate came from transport, followed by restaurants and hotels, housing and household

## Dates for your diary.....

At some point in the next few months we hope that we will be able to move to hybrid meetings, with some people attending in person and others able to join online from home.

### October

7th Negotiations Committee, 10am to 12.30pm.

12th National Retired Member's Conference, 2 day event online.

21st Branch Committee, 6pm to 7.30pm.

### November

4th Negotiations Committee, 12pm to 2pm.

18th Branch Committee, 6pm to 7.30pm.

### December

2nd Negotiations Committee, 10am to 12.30pm

16th Branch Committee, 6pm to 7.30pm.



North Yorkshire Branch

# Branch Activist Newsletter

News and updates for branch officers, activists and workplace reps ♦ Vol.1 Issue 6 ♦ 27 September 2021

## Temporary exemption for mandatory vaccinations

As previously advised, anyone who has to enter a CQC-registered care home for work is required to be fully vaccinated from 11 November. This means those affected would have to have had their first dose by 16 September or face dismissal. Across North Yorkshire we know that there are about 350 workers affected across the public and private sectors. This number has come down in recent weeks, but still means 350 workers face being sacked on 11 November. As most of these will be care workers, this will add to the staffing crisis in adult social care.

Perhaps in recognition of this ill-thought out plan, the government announced (at the last minute) an exemption scheme. Those who believe they are medically exempt, or women who are pregnant can now self-certify their exemption and continue working in a CQC-registered care home after 11 November.

One reason for this apparent U-turn is that the government has still not decided what would constitute a valid 'medical exemption' as to why someone cannot have the vaccination. This means that anyone can self-certify if they think they may qualify for a medical exemption. We assume that this could include someone who suffers with anxiety about having the vaccination.

The exemption will last for 12-weeks, not from when they submit the form but from when the government launches its long-awaited medical exemption NHS service.

### What advice to give members?

If you are supporting a member where you work who has been issued with their notice of dismissal, you must advise them to:

- Appeal against the decision. The employer might argue that they do not have a right to an appeal, as the dismissal is to comply with the law. However, we advise that members should appeal and then seek legal advice via the branch.
- Consider whether they might have a medical exemption. As stated above, there is no list of what constitutes a medical exemption so it is really up to the member to decide if they believe they could have a medical exemption.
- Ask the member to complete the self-certification form, which can be downloaded on the branch website. We have also included a copy with this mailing.

In all cases, if you have not already done so, please make sure you have informed the branch office of your case.

### Contact the branch office

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01609 532718

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The branch office is currently closed to visitors due to Covid restrictions, but branch admin staff are continuing to work as normal 9am to 4.30pm on Mondays to Fridays.

# The big issue...

## We have been working with our members at two workplaces in North Yorkshire where violence and assaults at work have been an issue

According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales, 350,000 workers are assaulted every year whilst simply doing their jobs. UNISON believes that this is unacceptable and are campaigning for tougher legislation for anyone who assaults public service workers. We also think that employers should be doing more to prevent these attacks in the first place.

As a UNISON workplace representative, you play a crucial role where you work in monitoring violence at work and supporting our members.



We have been aware for some time of two linked workplaces in North Yorkshire where members were reporting significant levels of violence, assaults, abuse and threats. We tried to engage with the employer, but felt our concerns were being dismissed or downplayed. We decided to undertake a survey of our members at these workplaces. The participation rate was amazing (90% of members took part), but the results were shocking. We have passed on our report to senior managers at the employer, along with a list of actions that we want to see implemented including a review of all relevant risk assessments and also the creation of a proper, joint Health & Safety Committee.

We shouldn't need to do this, but it does show what we can do where our members are experiencing problems with violence at work and where employers fail to act.

### What should employers be doing?

All employers have a duty to risk assess all reasonably foreseeable hazards and to put in place measures to mitigate the risk of those hazards. We think that violence at work is a potential hazard, which in most cases can be foreseen (the risk of violence, not the specific incidents). Measures that an employer could take, based on their risk assessment can include:

- Removing the need to carry cash, or high value equipment;
- Relocating community-based roles to more secure environments such as offices;
- Adapting public spaces where you work to make them less confrontational and safer;
- Provide staff with training to help manage situations safely.

### What should members do if they are attacked or assaulted at work?

- Report it immediately to a manager, who should check that they are OK, and whether the need medical treatment
- If an assault has taken place, ask your manager to report it to the police
- Record the incident in the accident book (or whatever system the employer has in place)
- Consider making a Personal injury claim via UNISON's legal services.

## Low-paid workers bear the brunt

Research by the TUC has found that low-paid workers have borne the brunt of the pandemic, with many finding themselves in financial difficulty while the high-paid are more financially comfortable than before.

It found that those earning less than £15,000 per year are almost twice as likely as high-paid workers (those earning more than £50,000) to say they have cut back on spending since the pandemic began (28 per cent compared to 16 per cent).

In addition, high earners are three times more likely than low-paid workers to expect to receive a pay rise in the next 12 months (37 per cent compared to 12 per cent).

The polling also shows that only a third (35 per cent) of low-paid workers say they get full pay when off sick compared to 80 per cent of high-paid workers. They are also four times more likely than high-paid workers to say they cannot afford to take time off work when sick (24 per cent compared to six per cent).

This lack of decent sick pay is compounded by the fact that low-paid workers are more than three times more likely than high-paid workers to say they their job means they can only work outside the home (74 per cent compared to 20 per cent).

This means that low-paid workers face greater risk of contracting the virus at work, and when ill, often face the impossible choice of doing the right thing but losing income or keeping full pay but potentially spreading the virus.

The TUC has called on the government to:

- Extend the furlough scheme for as long as necessary to protect jobs and livelihoods
- Put in place a permanent short-time working scheme to protect workers at times of economic change
- Cancel the planned £20 cut to Universal Credit.

As part of a post-pandemic reset, it is also urging ministers to:

- Ban zero hours contracts
- Raise the minimum wage immediately to at least £10
- Increase statutory sick pay to a real Living Wage and make it available to all
- Introduce new rights for workers to bargain for better pay and conditions through their unions.



## Follow the branch on social media

We provide and share regular updates, news and interesting articles via the branch social media accounts; If you don't already, why not follow us?



You can also engage with us and share your ideas and views, but please remember never share anything on social media that can identify where you work and never make comments that could bring you or your employer into disrepute. Keep social media and work separate.