

## New protections needed on workplace surveillance

Almost one in three workers (32 per cent) are now being monitored at work - up from a quarter (24 per cent) just six months ago in April, research for the union Prospect has found.

This work surveillance includes a doubling of the use of camera monitoring in people's homes, with 13 per cent of home workers currently being monitored by cameras compared to 5 per cent six months ago. The polling, which was conducted by respected pollster Opinium, also found that 80 per cent of workers thought that the use of webcams to monitor remote workers should either be banned (52 per cent) or heavily regulated (28 per cent), with only 8 per cent of workers thinking that employers should be allowed to decide unilaterally when to use cameras to monitor people working in their own homes.

The finding comes as the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is reviewing guidance to employers on the use of new technologies such as monitoring. Prospect has launched a new sector for tech workers and said it "is putting the issue of

surveillance front and centre in the drive to unionise the sector, alongside other issues such as discrimination at work, long hours culture, and pay."

UNISON share the concerns about privacy and surveillance at work. Of course, there may well be valid reasons for workplace surveillance and monitoring, not least for the protection of staff members. Under their duty to protect the health and safety of their staff, UNISON would expect employers to put in place systems for ensuring they know where their staff are, particularly those working in the community and alone. But systems are only as good as the information collected and the actions that follow.

### Contact the branch office

☎ 01609 532317 or  
01609 532718

✉ unison@northyorks.gov.uk

UNISON Office  
Grounds of 3 Racecourse Ln  
Northallerton  
DL7 8QZ

[www.northyorks-unison.org.uk](http://www.northyorks-unison.org.uk)

## 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.

### December

- 2nd Negotiations Committee, 10am to 12.30pm
- 2nd Confidence Building, bitesize online course. 1pm to 2pm. UNISON regional education. Email Rosie Bent at regional office for details and to register (r.bent@unison.co.uk)
- 3rd National Young members' conference, runs until 5th December in Cardiff.
- 6th Retired member's committee, 11am. Venue to be confirmed.
- 14th Branch Committee, 6pm to 7.30pm. \*\*\*NOTE NEW DATE\*\*\*

### January

- 6th Negotiations Committee, 10am to 12.30pm
- 19th Branch Committee, 6pm to 7.30pm.



# Branch Activist Newsletter

News and updates for branch officers, activists and workplace reps ♦ Vol.1 Issue 9 ♦ 22 November 2021

## Ballot papers due to drop for local government and schools strike action

Ballot papers will start to arrive from 1 December for members who work in local government and schools. Members are being asked to vote YES to strike action to help us fight for an improved pay offer.

After years of declining pay, council and school workers have had enough. It's time to take action. We are asking members to vote YES to strike - to take action to improve their pay. Enough is enough!

If you are a UNISON rep at a council or in a school, please make sure our members are aware that their ballot paper will be arriving soon. They will receive a letter, information and ballot paper to their home address. They need to return their vote straight away, but at least no later than Friday 14 January.

It is vital that every member votes. New Tory government laws restricting trade unions mean that to take strike action at least 40% of all members must vote YES to strike, and we must have at least a 50% turnout. The best way to make sure we achieve that threshold is for every member to return their ballot paper and to vote YES.

We only ask members to go on strike as a last resort. We're still using every means possible to make the employers improve their offer through negotiation. But if they don't, we need to stand firm together. We would start with an initial day of action. If this wasn't enough to force them to their senses, we might need further days of action. We are balloting over 375,000 members who work for councils and schools across England and Wales. If it comes to it, strike action will not happen until the end of February.

[www.unison.org.uk/lgpay](http://www.unison.org.uk/lgpay)



# The big issue.....

***The real Living Wage has risen to £9.90 an hour (outside London), but our General Secretary Christina McAnea argues that we shouldn't be under any illusion: by itself the Living Wage does not offer a long-term solution to low pay, persistent gender and ethnicity pay gaps, and obscene levels of inequality.***



Living Wage Week is the annual celebration of the Living Wage movement. It's always a good time for us to take stock, as UNISON has a long history of campaigning for a fair day's pay for a fair day's (or night's) work, to prevent in-work poverty and exploitative low wages.

This week, the new Living Wage rates were announced. This means a pay increase for about 300,000 working people – up 40p to £9.90 across the UK, and £11.05 in London. There are now 9,000 real Living Wage employers, but we have much further to go and there is much more to do to eradicate low pay in the UK.

Low pay is still a fact of life for too many, as close to five million people are still paid below the real Living Wage. It's no surprise that two-thirds of them are women, as women dominate careers that are notoriously underpaid and undervalued, such as caring, cleaning and catering.

This structural sexism is clear to see in the social care workforce, where 73 per cent of workers are paid below the Living Wage. In the context of cuts to Universal Credit, soaring household bills, and empty promises of levelling up and a high wage economy, the real Living Wage offers an important benchmark. It is at least benchmarked against inflation, it's payable to all staff from the age of 18, and it remains significantly above the government's highest minimum wage rate (NLW).

A full-time worker earning the real Living Wage of £9.90 an hour would earn £1,930 a year more than a worker earning the current government minimum.

But we shouldn't be under any illusion. By itself the Living Wage does not offer a long-term solution to a UK labour market characterised by low pay, persistent gender and ethnicity pay gaps, and obscene levels of inequality. We need a new deal, and UNISON is leading the campaign for a new deal for public service workers. This can only be delivered when governments and employers view public services as drivers of the economy, with an employment bill that ends zero hour contracts, and puts workers' rights at the heart of our recovery from the pandemic. And of course, a resurgence of collective bargaining across the economy. If the Westminster government was serious about levelling up, it would already be delivering this new deal.

*The above article is taken from a blog written by Christina on the UNISON website, dated 19 November 2021.*

You can find out more about the real Living Wage here: [www.livingwage.org.uk](http://www.livingwage.org.uk).

Don't confuse the **real** Living Wage with the National Minimum Wage, which the government cynically rebranded as the National Living Wage. The government's minimum wage will increase to £9.50 an hour from 1 April next year which is still below the **real** Living Wage.

## NYCC News

There has been quite a lot going on with regard to Pay & Reward matters at NYCC, including a number of requests we have made to improve policies and allowances.

### WEEKEND WORKING ALLOWANCE

About a year ago we asked NYCC to review the weekend working allowance, as we felt the current allowance is unfair for part-time staff and low-earners. NYCC agreed to the review, and have also acknowledged that they need to increase the money spent on the allowance to help attract and retain staff. We should have some final proposals soon which we will share with members working for NYCC.

### COVID 'THANK YOU'

We have asked NYCC to follow the lead of some of the district councils and offer staff a 'thank-you' for the Covid response. We are currently looking at options and hope that NYCC will be able to offer staff something soon.

### FLEXIBLE WORKING

We have requested that NYCC work with us to agree a better flexible working policy. We have proposed; no limits on the number of requests that can be made in a year, a right from day one to make flexible working requests (currently can only make a request after 6 months) and a presumption to grant requests unless there is a good reason not to.

## Christmas working arrangements

Christmas falls over the weekend this year, which means the official bank holidays move to the following Monday/Tuesday.

- Christmas Day, 25 December moves to Monday 27 December
- Boxing Day, 26 December moves to Tuesday 28 December
- New Years' Day, 1 January moves to Monday 3 January

Your entitlement to bank holidays and additional payments will depend on what your contract says. Members who work in the private sector need to be clear with their managers as to what they will get paid if they work over Christmas and New Year. If you have queries from members where you work please ask them to check what their contract says and then contact the branch office for advice if needed.

In local government, the NJC minimum only allows for 3 bank holidays to be paid during the period. This means that there is the potential for staff who work every day to not get paid anything extra for 25, 26 December and 1 January. We are negotiating with North Yorkshire County Council at the moment about discretionary payments where this may happen.

For council workers, the **minimum** entitlements are:

If you work Saturday AND Monday you are entitled to weekend payment for Saturday, double-time and time off in lieu for Monday.

If you work Saturday OR Monday you are entitled to double-time and time off in lieu for the day you work.

If you work Monday (27th) AND Tuesday (28th), you are entitled to double-time and time off in lieu for both days.

If you work 25, 26, 27 and 28 December, you are entitled to weekend payment for 25 and 26 December, double-time and time off in lieu for 27 and 28 December.

## 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?



@NYUnison



NorthYorkshireUnison

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.