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Please join the new Branch Facebook Group at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1077256209678817>



**More information and news**  
can be obtained from these websites.

UCU National Website:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk>

AgeUK: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/>

68 is too late: [www.68istoolate.org.uk](http://www.68istoolate.org.uk)

National Pensioners Convention (NPC):

<http://npcuk.org>

**Follow your branch:**

Website: <http://www.ucu-em-rmb.org.uk>

Twitter: @ucu-em-rmb

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### Branch Meetings

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022, 10.30am

The Mechanics Institute  
3 North Sherwood Street  
Nottingham, NG1 4EZ

At 11.30:

“Refugees: problems and solutions”

Speaker:

Roger Tanner  
Nottingham Refugee Forum



## 1. University Strikes announced

58 HE branches will be taking strike action from Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December to Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> December following strong votes for action in separate ballots over USS pension cuts and pay and working conditions (the Four Fights). The higher education committee (HEC) met on 12<sup>th</sup> November and agreed to call members out on strike and for action short of a strike (ASOS) to start with working to contract from 1<sup>st</sup> December.

In the USS pension ballot, 76% of UCU members who voted supported strike action and 88% voted for ASOS. In the Four Fights pay and working conditions ballot 70.1% of those voting backed strike action with 84.9% voting for action short of strike. The Four Fights concern pay cuts, casualisation, equality pay gaps and unsafe workloads. The National Union of Students is supporting staff who are taking industrial action. The overall turnout in the pension ballot was 53% and for the Four Fights it was 51%. Ballots were disaggregated and 58 branches have secured a mandate for strike action.

The General Secretary has written to Universities UK and the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA), setting out how strike action before Christmas could be avoided, through opening immediate genuine negotiations, with the prospect of pension cuts being revoked; and for improvements in the pay offer and a commitment to meaningful agreements and action on casualisation, workload, and equality pay gaps. HE staff pay has fallen by 20% after twelve years of below inflation pay rises; one third of academic staff are on insecure contracts; the gender pay gap sits at 15% and the most recent Higher Education Statistics Agency figures reveal that, of 22,810 professors in the UK, under a third (27%) were women and only 155 (<1%) were Black; staff are also experiencing a crisis of work-related stress with over half showing signs of probable depression.

Staff at 64 universities have a mandate to take ASOS, beginning on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December. This will include strictly working to contract and refusing any additional duties. This is planned to last for the five months for which staff have a mandate to take industrial action.

A number of branches that missed the 50% turnout threshold imposed by Tory anti-trade union laws will be re-balloted. The three-day strike will just be the start of sustained disruption for the sector if employers fail to negotiate. The disputes will escalate next term. If employers do not make improved offers, further industrial action is likely

to continue into the spring, at which point branches that gain a mandate in their re-ballots will be able to join the action.

### **33 institutions will see strikes over both pay and pensions, including in our region:**

Loughborough University  
University of Nottingham

### **21 will see strikes over pay only, including in our region:**

University of Leicester

Four will see strikes over pensions only, none of which are in the East Midlands.

### **Six institutions will see action short of a strike over pay, including in our region:**

Bishop Grosseteste University

[the above article is adapted from a number of items variously published by UCU nationally]

[Rob Kirkwood](#)

## **Retired Member Branch to join Picket Line.**

Please come along to the Nottingham University South Entrance, University Boulevard, on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> December from 8.30am.

## **Please Donate to the fighting fund**

Please support fellow members who are taking industrial action. Our union uses its fighting fund to support members involved in disputes, including the provision of strike pay where appropriate. Congress has recognised the current economic situation means that it is likely that there will be a number of disputes to save jobs and services and protect conditions. It therefore recommended that members who can afford to do so should make an annual donation to the fighting fund to support others. Congress suggested that an appropriate donation would be £25, depending upon individual circumstances, but any donation to support colleagues taking action will be greatly appreciated and used directly to help members on strike.

### **How to donate**

- Make a direct bank transfer, or set up a regular standing order, to:

**Account name: UCU Fighting Fund**  
**Sort code: 60-83-01**  
**Account no: 20179432**  
**Reference: 'Fighting Fund Voluntary Levy'**

- or send a cheque (payable to 'University and College Union') to:  
**Fighting Fund donation**  
**Finance Dept**  
**University and College Union**  
**Carlow Street**  
**London**  
**NW1 7LH**

Please, give whatever support you can.

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## 2. Committee Reports

### **Report from the East Midlands HE Sector Committee meeting on 02 October 2021**

The meeting was well attended with all but two universities represented. The next HEC meeting was going to take place the week after, to plan the ballot for the Four Fights. The ballot would be disaggregated. There was a brief discussion regarding the funding of these strikes. The other major subject for discussion was guidance on hybrid working and Covid safety. It transpired that some universities were using hybrid working as an excuse to reduce the space available for academic and academic-related staff.

The Regional Official's report focused on the efforts of the Regional Office to get the vote out. The dispute in Leicester was ongoing where Branch Officers had been targeted for redundancy. The Regional Official also emphasised that training for Branches would be offered at local level, particularly where the Branch had a number of new Officers.

Branch reports echoed the more general discussion. Branches were focusing on getting the vote out and on Covid safety. The picture on the latter was mixed but management seemed to follow the Government line that the pandemic was pretty much contained. At some universities, management were undermining existing workload models.

There was some discussion as to how the Sector Committee would be able to support individual Branches and there was a concern that it would be more difficult to motivate staff in post-1992 institutions. It was agreed that special meetings of the East Midlands Sector Committee would be

organised if delegates felt that this would be helpful.

### **Report from the East Midlands Regional Committee, held on 02 October 2021**

The FE Sector reported that in terms of Covid safety, strong H&S reps were really useful. It became clear, however, that both sectors were concerned and that in the absence of clear government guidance, each institution followed their own path. Staff were not, on the whole, consulted and the main driver for institutions seemed to be income over safety.

FE also reported that the pay differential with the school sector was growing and also not keeping pace with inflation. Where Colleges were making any offers, they were very low, increasing the gap further. There were also attempts at withholding increments and threats to increase teaching loads. Colleges were also organising for industrial action.

Harry Ziegler

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## 3. Midlands TUC Pensioners Network

### **Notes from a Zoom meeting on November 17<sup>th</sup> 2021**

The meeting was chaired by Sandra Durkin and the agenda included various discussions on ways of managing meetings and communications for the future.

Apparently, meetings were originally scheduled to be held in Derby as that is most central to the network, which is very large and widespread across the region including such far flung places as Wolverhampton and Lincoln.

Concern was expressed about safety measures at possible face to face meetings during the pandemic, the suitability of blended/hybrid meetings, and also the use of public transport to facilitate these, such as trains and busses. The value of being able to see and talk or chat to each other would be very welcome, when again possible. Other issues discussed included problems with the involvement of Trades Councils in reporting to the network in some county council areas. Campaign Packs for the continuation of the Bus Campaign are available and Rob Johnson would be willing to speak on this to Trades Councils or other groups who would be interested.

Strong feelings were expressed about the need to campaign on the importance of pensions for future pensioners as "pension poverty" is becoming a real

and current issue. This included concern for the lack of representation of Pensioners Networks at TUC national meetings, and issues for black workers although participation in Black Lives Matter campaigns was strong.

Apparently, age is an “Equality Strand” for young and old and was represented during Equalities week which included joint meetings of all the strands. The Gender Pay Gap was also mentioned and updates on the Bus Campaign – still ongoing but with some concern about the development of the “cashless society”, which is not easy for many people such as the elderly or disabled especially as cash points seem to be rapidly disappearing as well.

The next meetings have been scheduled for January and March and later in 2022.

Rowena Dawson

#### 4. Social Care: when is a solution not a solution?

Government proposals to deal with the crisis in adult social care have moved forward with glacial slowness; the crisis has galloped. Some 67% of the 340 registered managers surveyed by the National Care Forum reported that they have either limited or stopped admissions of any new people into care homes or they have had to refuse to take on new requests for domiciliary care. Care homes have been forced to reject requests from nearly 5,000 people due to staffing shortages over a period of six weeks in the early Autumn. The Association of Adult Social Services vice-president Sarah McClinton commented: “We are facing a perfect storm, with care staff quitting, family carers reaching breaking point, care agencies going out of business, and people with support needs waiting longer and receiving less care and support.”

She added: “We must have immediate investment so that the dedicated, skilled people providing care and support are paid a proper social care wage that can compete with the retail and hospitality sectors. It is unconscionable that we continue to expect them to work for less than they would get flipping burgers or stacking shelves.”

Finally at long last, proposals have been put forward by the Government supposedly to provide bold funding reforms for social care. A 1.25% rise in national insurance, payable by employers and employees (including working pensioners for the first time) and a new tax on dividends will be a health and social care levy that is expected to raise

£36bn in the next three years. The government also proposes to increase the social care means-test threshold on assets to £100,000 (from around £23,250 now) and impose an £86,000 cap on care costs.

The proposed cap is misleading. It excludes board and lodging fees, only covers council-approved rates, does not apply until the person’s needs are already substantial and does not reflect the actual costs people will pay for care. The amount spent on care before reaching the cap is likely to be well over **£150,000** before any public funding begins. Indeed, analysis from a sector research body suggested it may take six years for a person in a care home costing £50,000 a year to breach the proposed £86,000 cap but by that time they may have spent £150,000-£300,000 or more on ‘hotel costs’.

These measures will not resolve the care crisis – and the money raised is not even ring-fenced for care. Government has said funds will go first into the NHS, reinforcing the second-class status of social care that has led to the crisis. National insurance is certainly not the right way to fund this new levy. It is a regressive tax, which hits the lowest-paid hardest and the national insurance threshold is £3000 lower than the personal tax threshold. The IFS has suggested that if the government’s incoming levy is to meet social care needs then its rate will need to more than double from 1.25% to 3.15 % by the end of the decade.

The recent spending review has not helped the Social Care sector. The Institute for Fiscal Studies said: “The government’s announcement of an extra £5.4bn for social care over the next three years ...is far from offering a sustainable funding solution for the local government sector as a whole. Buried in the detail is the suggestion that councils will still be expected to meet demand and cost pressures through council tax rises and efficiency savings.” The National Audit Office explained: “Local government ‘spending power’ – the amount the government calculates councils have available to spend – fell from 2010-11 to 2016-17 in real terms, chiefly due to central government cuts.”

The whole situation is made far worse due to the increased need for Social Care. County Councils Network research showed rising costs of services such as adults’ and children’s social care were also driving local authorities’ deficits. “Yearly increases in people requiring care, and the rising costs of delivering those services, will mean that CCN’s member councils will be required to spend an additional £3.2bn annually on adult social care by 2030 compared to 2020 – a 40% rise.”

Age UK charity director Caroline Abrahams said: “The extra money that was announced for local



government was not ring-fenced for social care and will need to be stretched thinly across council services, after a decade of under-funding.”

Even the politically cautious Nuffield Trust distanced itself from Rishi Sunak after he had set out his public expenditure plans for 2022-25. “Increases of 3% across all local government services are welcome, but they are not enough to address the disastrous situation in social care. The sector will face a stark choice between trying to improve access to care and support for people, or simply trying to stabilise the system in which care providers are on their knees hampered by a devastating shortage of staff.”

The 3% increase seems yet another exercise in smoke and mirrors. The Institute for Fiscal Studies said that existing council services, including social care, would only be receiving a rise of 1.8% in real terms a year, lower than the 3.3% average for government departments. And this is contingent on authorities raising council tax by 2% a year, the maximum rise permitted without a local referendum!

The new deal for Adult Social care is inadequately funded and raises most of the extra money via the regressive NI system which places the burden on those least able to afford it. It covers only a small proportion of those in Social Care. After it comes into effect in 2023, the new policy will directly help about 150,000 more people at any one time. And this is according to government. The fight for a properly funded Social Care system, with adequately paid staff and under Local Government control continues.

[Julian Atkinson](#)

## 5. Who do we think we are?>

Recent news reports that our home office minister and others are planning to turn back refugee and migrant boats attempting to cross the channel to seek asylum here, has been shocking. Priti Patel, the Home Secretary, complained about having to put people in hotel accommodation which she described as “suboptimal and counter-productive, acting as a pull factor for people to come to the country illegally”. She also said there was a legal basis for turning around small boats at sea which she described as not illegal at all. Nigel Farage joined the debate by accusing the RNLI of operating a ‘migrant taxi service’!

However, government lawyers have recently warned Ms Patel that she would probably lose a legal challenge if she implements plans to turn

around small boats of migrants in the channel. Current discussions in parliament and elsewhere also suggest that legal challenges to such ‘turnaround’ tactics are likely to be successful.

The debate goes on as Border Force staff are worried that refugees are continuing to risk their lives by taking to the boats this late and later in the year. For example, 1200+ people were reported as arriving in the UK on one day, having to be sheltered in very poor conditions without proper beds or toilet facilities etc. Fortunately, the RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution) remains “very proud of its humanitarian work and continues to respond to coastguard callouts to rescue at-risk channel migrants in line with its duty under international maritime law”.



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Other worrying events have been highlighted by ‘The Movement for Justice’ and Jamaica’s High Commissioner in London. These include plans for the continuing deportation of people of Jamaican and West Indian origin who apparently came to this country as children, not as refugees or asylum seekers but as legitimate family members of people seeking employment here, but who have never had official British Citizenship.

The Refugee Council reports that the Home Secretary has recently announced “the government’s new plan for immigration: a two-tier system that effectively discriminates against certain asylum seekers for the way in which they arrive in the UK”. All of which seems unfair, dangerous, inhospitable and unkind. Who are we to object to those wanting to join us on our island home? Where did we come from that gives us the right to turn others away, and why would we? So, who are we? Who were our ancestors? How did they get here and why did they come??? Very big questions.

Here in the East Midlands, we and our ancestors have received invaders, migrants and refugees from many places, over many ages including people such as Vikings, Normans, Romans, Huguenots, Jews, West Indians, Hungarians/Eastern Europeans, and Ugandan Asians to name just a few. Many of these are well known to historians and archaeologists who continue to find and discuss usual and unusual links to our past.



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Recent very sombre and serious Remembrance Services, parades and events clearly illustrate our links to many other once colonised countries, showing just how much we owe to peoples from all over the world. Even popular television programmes such as “Who do you think you are”, “A House Through Time” and “Antiques Road Show” reveal fascinating details of this history including people’s links to different countries and cultures from the past right up to the present day. These all show the multicultural nature of our society and the contributions made by so many different people from so many different places and traditions. Surely these links should be appreciated and celebrated more for the contributions made to our society and such people given the right to come here without question.

**Rowena Dawson**

## 6. Health Service Crisis Point

*As colleagues may recall, our branch is affiliated to Health Campaigns Together, the article below is one of many that are available from their website at [healthcampaignstogether.com](http://healthcampaignstogether.com)*

It’s not normal for a senior hospital chief executive to phone Health Service Journal Editor Alastair McLellan on a Sunday lunchtime to speak out on the massive stress the NHS is under, warn his trust,

and probably all trusts, are providing inadequate care – and confess he doesn’t know where to turn. It’s most unusual for a chief executive to speak frankly to staff about fears that their trust is facing such pressure that its giant teaching hospital is “ceasing to function as a hospital.” The leaked warnings came from an internal meeting at Cambridge University Hospitals Foundation Trust. **Both happened within days of each other.** Now an NHS Confederation survey has found almost 90% of trust bosses believe the pressures on their organisation have become ‘unsustainable,’ putting patient safety at risk, and the NHS is at a “tipping point,” – directly refuting Health Secretary Sajid Javid’s complacent claims last month. This is the utterly unprecedented crisis that almost 12 years of Tory austerity, exacerbated by Covid-19, has brought upon the NHS, while ministers are living in denial.

### **The figures tell the stark truth:**

- Almost 6 million people waiting for treatment, 292,000 of them for over a year;
- Ambulances queuing for hours to hand over emergency patients;
- A&E and GP services facing record levels of demand for treatment;
- Mental health services short of beds and staff -- leaving 1.5 million without the care they need;
- NHS beds are filled with patients who cannot be discharged for lack of social care support outside hospital;

Over a million people are not getting the care and support they need: social care faces a “tsunami of unmet need” according to the CQC; Care staff vacancies up from 6% to 10% in a few months, – with potentially tens of thousands more about to lose their jobs because they won’t get vaccinated.

### **The situation in the NHS was bad and worsening before Covid.**

But during 2020 hospitals lost around 15% of vital front-line capacity, and Covid-19 is still causing chaos, with 7,000+ Covid patients in English hospitals (Nov 5), and thousands more beds still left closed or empty.

Capacity is further reduced by chronic staff shortages, with over 94,000 vacancies, 77,000 sickness absences at the last count and NO serious workforce strategy.

Too many NHS hospitals are literally falling down, or struggling on with clapped out kit and dilapidated buildings – with the backlog maintenance bill now £9.2 billion – and no money to invest in reopening closed or unused beds.

## **The danger is that delays, failures and gaps in care will mean growing numbers of patients and the wider public lose confidence in the NHS.**

As long waits increase, more patients in pain who can afford it will opt to 'self-pay,' while others consider taking out health insurance to cover elective care.

This threatens to leave the large majority who can't afford to do this, and all those needing emergency care or more complex treatment queueing to use an increasingly run-down service. Ministers want you to believe that they have given generous funding increases: they were lying before the spending review – and they are still lying now. There is no funding to pay for the promised 50,000 additional nurses that we all knew would never be recruited. There is no funding for any big pay increase next year. There's nowhere near enough money to pay for 40 new hospitals. It's all lies and distortions.

Twelve years brutal austerity policies require BIG spending now to repair and restore the NHS. **The NHS can't live off empty rhetoric about "record spending" and empty promises of "40 new hospitals by 2030" ... any more than health workers could live off the applause they received in place of a pay increase.**

Campaigners urgently need to focus on the bigger picture here: the NHS itself is under threat, and while money alone is not enough, none of the problems can be solved without more cash and capital in the pot to rebuild, repair and reopen our NHS, and recruit, train and retain the staff we need. The spending review settlement was not enough: with the government weakened by the corruption scandals, we need a concerted campaign to force a political crisis – and emergency measures to allow sufficient bank and agency staff to keep services open and patients safe, wards to be re-planned to maximise capacity, and give hope to embattled NHS staff that there can be light at the end of a very long tunnel.

## **Health Campaigns Together**

### **7. UCU Retired Members Branch**

See how to join our new Branch Facebook group, as detailed in the information section on Page 1.

Our branch has been meeting since 2008 and now has over 300 members. Our aims are listed below. We meet three times a year, often in places of interest to make part of a day out. Meetings focus on important issues for UCU pensioners and

provide a chance to talk with other retired members.

A termly newsletter with articles of interest to retired UCU members is e-mailed to all branch members for whom we have addresses and to UCU branch secretaries in the East Midlands and to other RMBs.

Please let us have your personal e-mail address and let us know if it changes.

### **RMB Roles and Functions**

- To represent the interests of retired members within the union.
- To represent the interests of retired union members within the wider union and pensioner movements.
- To provide a forum within the union for retired members to come together to consider and debate matters of mutual interest.
- To provide a resource of collective memory, advice and expertise in support of the union, in particular to those still in active employment.
- To provide active support, where appropriate, by involving the broadest section of the branch in support of the wider interests of the union and its members, including support for those still in active employment.

**For more information**  
**please contact** Julian Atkinson  
e-mail: [secretary@ucu-em-rmb.org.uk](mailto:secretary@ucu-em-rmb.org.uk)

website: [www.ucu-em-rmb.org.uk](http://www.ucu-em-rmb.org.uk)  
twitter: @ucu-em-rmb

### **East Midlands Branch officers and committee**

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East Midlands regional UCU committee HE  
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