

Unite in Health newsletter

Spring 2016



Unite in Health is the newsletter for all Unite members who work in the NHS and associated health services. It is available on line for members, with hard copies available from your region. We'll update you on major developments in health and your union, Unite.

'I've been a doctor for 19 years, and have never known a time when the NHS and its staff were under such pressure'

Dr David Wrigley, a GP in Carnforth, Lancashire; member of the British Medical Association (BMA) UK Council; and Chair of Doctors in Unite (formerly Medical Practitioners' Union (MPU)), tells readers:

I qualified in 1997 as Labour came to power. Before then my patients faced 12-month waiting lists for heart surgery. By 2010, (when Labour lost power), my patients were getting their heart surgery in 12 weeks, and recovering well. Labour has a lot to be proud of about their role in the NHS.

In the past six years we've seen flat-line increases to NHS funding – just small amounts above inflation, so that Cameron can go on telly and say 'we have increased the NHS budget in real terms year on year'.

The Tories have managed to politicise a whole generation of doctors. They've made 53,000 junior doctors so angry that 98% of them voted for industrial action – an unprecedented turnout. Ministers had the gall to say that the BMA had 'mised' junior doctors - as if we'd brainwashed them all to vote for strike action. Junior doctors haven't been on strike since 1975, and now Cameron, Osborne and Hunt have pushed them too far. Right-wing media have smeared doctors, naming myself and colleagues as 'left-wing activists' and 'Trotskyites', and more shockingly, saying that we put our politics before our patients.

The recent junior doctors' strikes have seen massive public support, and I saw this myself on the picket line.

GPs are on the brink. A 'crisis conference' has just been held, where representatives of UK GPs got together to say 'enough is enough'. We've seen year on year reductions in resources for general practice, yet we see 1 million patients in our surgeries every day. We need another 10,000 GPs, when the UK has fewer doctors per head of population than almost every other European country. Patient care is now at



Left to right: Prof Ian Banks, Dr David Wrigley, Dr Jacky Davis (Doctors in Unite (MPU) member), Dr Clive Peedell and Prof Allyson Pollock, campaigning outside the Prime Minister's Witney constituency office

risk - with GPs working 14-hour non-stop days, leaving no time to stop and think about the vital decisions we make every day. It's quite normal for us to see 40 - 50 patients a day, crammed into inadequate 10-minute appointments.

GPs are suffering with mental breakdowns, panic attacks and other illnesses. Surgeries are now closing due to lack of funding, so patients lose that connection with their GP forever.

Unite has a role to speak out about the disaster occurring in the NHS, and Doctors in Unite will certainly highlight the serious threat to its ongoing existence.

Dr Wrigley is also co-author of 'NHS for Sale: Myths, Lies and Deception', Merlin Press, 5 March 2015, ISBN. 978-0-85036-627-3, which writer Ken Loach calls 'Essential reading in the battle to save the NHS before private companies bleed it dry.'

- Read Dr David's blog at <http://drdavidwrigley.blogspot.co.uk> and follow him on twitter @davidwrigley

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Regulars: Member get Member reward, update your details.

www.unitetheunion.org/health

Saying Sorry – the duty of candour

From April 2015, all organisations providing health care in England have to comply with the 'duty of candour'.

What is it? It's a legal duty to inform and apologise to patients, if there have been mistakes in their care, and they've been harmed. It's based on Robert Francis' recommendations in his report on Mid-Staffordshire.

Your employer should make sure that you know how this affects you, as a member of staff, if you work in a hospital, community, emergency or mental health setting.

Find out if your employer now has a 'duty of candour' policy. It should be clear about how incidents should be reported accurately when things go wrong, and how staff can be open with patients. Your employer should encourage and support you to help patients understand what has happened to them. An investigation may shed

light on what's taken place - no-one's expected to speculate if the facts aren't known.

The duty of candour aims to help patients get accurate, truthful information. Health providers should be open when errors are made and harm caused. All NHS and independent health bodies in England, registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) now have to comply with the duty of candour, by law.

This makes it more important than ever that everyone keeps accurate records, and understands their own responsibilities towards patients or clients, their families and the public. If you're practicing as a professional, your regulatory body may have guidance available on their website – check if you don't know.

In essence, the duty of candour is the employer or organisation's responsibility – so has anything really changed for members of staff? Well, whatever job

you do, good record-keeping's still vital, and there's always been a duty to report to the appropriate person if anything goes wrong while you're working, whether directly with patients or not.



Find out more: Unite in Health regional training for members on the duty of candour is coming soon. Check your organisation's intranet for their policy or information for staff. Download our Unite in Health factsheets, like the one above on 'Saying Sorry' from <http://tinyurl.com/h6xekh3>

Health Student Bursary cuts – marching for justice

Chancellor George Osborne plans to scrap government-funded bursaries for health undergraduate students in his November Spending Review. Many thousands of people were angry enough to protest in London on Saturday 9 January. They gathered outside St Thomas' Hospital, marched across Waterloo Bridge, along the Strand and Whitehall, to rally in Downing Street.

Our Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association (CPHVA) Journal reporters were there. One student nurse told them: 'Already nurses haven't had a pay rise since 2008, and they only get a one per cent increase until 2020, so having to pay debts off is a further cut... I don't think you should have to work for free'.

Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn sent a message of support, read out at the rally by shadow health secretary, Heidi Alexander. 'I admire our brilliant NHS staff and their work'. He wants to keep health bursaries for the next generation – without them, health professionals like nurses, cannot qualify, and could be lost to their profession. He said 'support for the NHS, and the brilliant work of all staff, will always be there from the Labour party'.

Our **Unite general secretary, Len McCluskey** told everyone: 'I want you to believe in your own



values, to believe in the values of fairness and decency of equality. I am confident that your strength, your enthusiasm, your commitment to our communities will win the day'.

Nursing students joined the junior doctors' second 24-hour walk-out on February 10 too, popular on Twitter under #bursaryor bust, alongside #junior doctors strike and #IamTheDoctorWho.

Student action was widely reported in the national press Twitter feeds too. The action was to protest about the bursary cuts, in solidarity with the junior doctors, and to fight the privatisation of the NHS. Many well-known 'tweeters' added their support, like author J K Rowling, and actors Peter Capaldi and John Hurt.

Follow www.twitter.com/UniteInHealth for stories like these, or see the Twitter feed at www.unitehealth.org/health.

Did you take part in the 'Big Workplace Meeting' during 8-14 February 2016?

Union members from all over the UK tuned in to hear comedian, actor and writer, Eddie Izzard, asking the TUC's general secretary, Frances O'Grady, about the Trade Union Bill (remember our piece in our Winter 2015/16 edition on how your union rights could be taken away?). If you missed it, you can tune into the archive at <http://heartunions.org/bigworkplacemeeting> where you'll also find snippets from workplaces that joined in the week of action.



Growing 'new you's' in schools

We think all our members do a fantastic job! But when did you find out how a union could support you at work? We can probably guess your careers teacher didn't tell you!

There's one way to share your experience with tomorrow's Unite in Health members - through the **Unite in Schools (UiS) Programme**: Over the past two years, Unite has run a national programme, aiming to de-mystify trade unions for school students. Sessions are run by volunteer Unite workplace reps. In the North West, UiS benefitted from a full-time co-ordinator, (Unite officer, Mary Sayer), plus a growing band of Unite speakers from a variety of sectors and a range of ages. Health Sector officers and workplace reps have been particularly active in supporting and building the programme.

UiS started as hour-long sessions in citizenship programmes, for students in years 10 and 11. Now, many schools are under pressure to achieve academic 'excellence', cutting citizenship modules, so we've had to adapt. Sessions now run in the context of careers days, part of young people's 'entitlement' to be prepared for the world of work, and around human rights. We hold longer sessions with school council reps – supporting

and developing school and youth councils. We're running campaigning and equalities days with younger students too. UiS is embedding into apprenticeship programmes in sixth-form centres, universities and colleges – working closely with student unions. Students are starting to realise, as the next generation, they've the skills and motivation to act collectively, campaign using social media, and run our trade unions effectively, fighting inequality, and gaining better working practices, as well as pay, terms and conditions.

Mary tells us they've had excellent feedback. Prestwich Arts College says: 'Our students benefit enormously from the involvement of the UiS team. It's fascinating and wonderful to see their journey away from an approach of apathy towards political engagement, as they become enthused about the role they can play in bringing about change. Please ensure it's sustainable,

Mary and her team are fantastic – every school in the country would benefit from their workshops!'

Why not volunteer?

Get involved in the programme, by contacting mary.sayer@unitetheunion.org, and visit our part of the Unite website at <http://tinyurl.com/h7lcrfa>

Be seen and heard!

Speech and Language Therapists and Assistants (SLTs) have a home in Unite in Health - if you're not with us, you're missing out!

Why? because we network together, share ideas, support practice, link with like-minded colleagues, and join in debate and consultation around issues in our profession. Our national organising professional committee (OPC), reps' and members' forums, give us an opportunity to shape speech and language therapy for the future.

If you work in speech and language therapy in the following regions, and you're keen to join our national OPC, we'd love to hear from you: East Midlands, North West, North East, Yorkshire & Humberside, South East and Wales.

Get involved and ensure your voice is heard – for more information about becoming an OPC member for your region, contact our Chair, Frances Ridgway frances.ridgway@unitetheunion.org, or our Unite Officer with responsibility for the SLT OPC, Frank Keogh frank.keogh@unitetheunion.org. Unite is working with the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT), and recently attended their annual general meeting (AGM) at Warwick University, to promote the benefits of union membership for professionals in the discipline.



Left to right: Jesika Parmar (former West Midlands Membership Development Officer), with Regional Officers Zoe Mayou and

Frank Keogh on the Unite in Health stall at the RCSLT AGM

Are you confused by new 'safeguarding' guidance and rules?

If you only work occasionally with children and young people, it can be difficult to keep up with child protection guidance, and easy to get it wrong. Do you sometimes work with vulnerable adults and realise that you're not up-to-date with recent practice? Unite in Health wants to offer the very best advice and support to all our members. We'd welcome comments from you about safeguarding, especially if you're a Health Sector member who could contribute towards our knowledge base on this subject.

Think you can help? Please contact Professional Officer Ros Godson at rosalind.godson@unitetheunion.org

A late 'stocking-filler'!

Unite makes Christmas special for poorly children

December 16 was a very long while ago, however, this is a good news story, so we've kept it in! Unite in Health reps from Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust branch brought festive cheer to children in the Royal Oldham Hospital in the run up to Christmas. Branch members generously donated £1,500 towards presents, (eg teddy bears and jigsaws), and food for a Christmas party. Money left over paid for educational toys and games for the children's department play area, to be used all year round.

Nigel Pollitt, who appears as Father Christmas here, (with little Ava, and her dad, Stuart Holmes), is our Unite branch secretary at The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust. Nigel tells us 'Unite branch chair, Gareth Griffiths, and I had the idea during the year - our members at the branch voted unanimously in favour of it. We wanted to show that unions have a personal side, and aren't just there for industrial issues. We care about our community, and even more about the children, who after all, are our future'.



Great outfit, Nigel, and well done to all the branch members!



16-22 May is Learning at Work week!

What will you be doing?

Ask your union learning reps, or for ideas, visit

www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk

Are you on Twitter?

If so, follow @LawWeekWire - and they'll follow you too!

Did you spot the Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust branch pop-up stand for meetings and events in the picture with Santa on the previous page?

Unite branch officials can contact Pellacraft, our merchandise partners http://www.pellacraft-unite.co.uk/merchandise/_/un-merch to discuss bespoke or personalised items.

Call them on **01623 636 602**, or email sales@pellacraft.com

New!

Unite in Health merchandise: Nurses' Fob Watch



Branches and individual members can find lots of lovely merchandise to purchase on http://www.pellacraft-unite.co.uk/unite-in-health/_/un-hlth

Are your membership details up to date?

We need all members to keep their membership records up to date. You can do this yourself. From the front page of the Unite website, Click on MEMBER LOGIN to check that your personal details, employer and workplace details, and your email and mobile numbers are correct.



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News Alert!

If you pay your Unite subscriptions by deduction from salary

Now's the time to switch to direct debit payments. In our winter edition, we told members that the government has decided to remove the ability for public sector employers to pay union subs via wage deduction (check-off). We're running a campaign to encourage those members who currently pay by this method to change, ideally to direct debit payment.

All health unions, as well as local government, education etc, have to plan for the change. Warn your friends in Unite and other unions that their membership could lapse without them knowing, meaning they won't be covered for representation at work, nor other membership benefits.

You will be able to change your payment method in the following ways:

1. By completing a special paper form handed out at workplaces, which will have a tear off slip to fill in your bank details.
2. By filling in the relevant direct debit part of a Unite or Unite in Health application form.
3. By completing a new web based form at <https://ddswitch.unitetheunion.org/>

Unite's Education programme for 2016

As well as our Unite Education programme 2016 for reps and members on <http://tinyurl.com/zut3ryy> - why not get up to speed on our 3-day taught Unite Health Sector Reps' training course.

Regions will run these if there is enough interest.

Speak to your Regional Officer or local Unite admin team to register your interest now.

Unite in Health Thinking Time – #UiHTT

Online updates and training for all Unite health sector members – check regularly for new information and development modules www.unitetheunion.org/UiHTT
If you've missed any, you can 'Think Again'

Unite is the union that stands up to fight with you to defend patient services and jobs!

Get your colleagues and friends to join Unite too – we're stronger with more members. See the Unite website for more details about how you can get up to £25 of vouchers for introducing your colleagues to Unite, at www.unitetheunion.org/introduce



Why not get your new member to recruit another, then they'll get a voucher for £25 too!



www.unitetheunion.org/health