

Branch Newsletter Spring 2020

Croydon UNISON

Message from Yvonne Green,
Branch Secretary



I would like to start with a message to all our members and their families to hope that they are all keeping well and staying safe during the **current Coronavirus (Covid19) crisis**. The branch is aware that this is a very difficult time for everyone especially for those members who are key workers and are still working on the front line. These key workers include those employed in social care, schools and other essential services that have been kept open to the public.

Due to the high number of queries the branch is receiving from its members due to coronavirus pandemic, I am sorry if any of you have had difficulties in reaching the branch.

During March the branch was very short staffed due to staff members being on long term sick and I was also on extended annual leave. I can assure you that we have not forgotten you or any of our members. We are having to work remotely and under very difficult circumstances.

We have been unable to answer the branch phone and pick up messages over the last few weeks but we are currently trying to get calls redirected so please continue to just email us for now at **branchoffice@croydonunison.co.uk**.

We have also had technical difficulties accessing branch emails remotely while working from home. This has now been resolved, and we will endeavour to acknowledge receipt of any enquiry immediately and forward the details to branch staff to deal with fully.

If contacting us through this busy period with an enquiry especially those relating to the coronavirus virus please can you provide your membership number, workplace and job title and if classed as a key worker.

Issues resulting from the Coronavirus Pandemic

The majority of staff working at BWH are now working from home where possible. A number of staff are waiting to hear about redeployment as their work place is currently closed. These include all Croydon Libraries.

However, we have received a number of emails from members about the state of **cleanliness at BWH and lack of PPE**. These have been from members who are still working at BWH such as social workers and other care staff due to the council offering a skeleton service from this building and other locations around the borough. On my return to work in April I spoke to Sue Moorman, Director of Human Resources and was informed that all guidance in terms of hygiene is being followed in relation to the public health authority guidance (PHA) and this is being adhered to by the council.

The BWH offices are being cleaned more regularly, and staff should not be expected to attend work in a risky environment. If any health issues are raised by staff a risk assessment should be carried out which is compliant with the PHA advice. Sue Moorman added that the council wanted to work with staff to alleviate any fears. She confirmed that cleaning is still continuing in BWH and the cleaners are focussing their energies on the floors that are being used which includes the wiping down of door handles, lift buttons, replenishing of hand wipes, soap etc. She is also ensuring that all staff are reminded to follow public health advice in the office, to include hand washing and social distancing.

The **lack of PPE** was raised by Dawn Gibbons, one of our committee members, when Jo Negrini held her first Microsoft on-line team event on Wednesday 8th April. Her question wasn't referred back to her by name although there were a number of questions about PPE and Jo Negrini did give a general reply on the subject. Jo's reply was that high risk workers /key priority groups would have priority to the available PPE first. She admitted there wasn't enough. The council are still trying to get more PPE in stock contacting local sources via the media to see if they can provide the council with any and not just waiting for national reserves to come. However, there was no mention of the situation at BWH. **I would advise that if you are short of PPE, you firstly contact your Line Manager as all members working on the front line should be given PPE to protect them.** These include items such as gloves, hand wipes, hand sanitizer and for those travelling to clients homes face masks.

There are over 50 **schools** in the borough that have been kept open for children of key workers and for SEN (Special Educational Needs) children. We have had members contact us from some of these schools including Cressney College, Riddlesdown Collegiate, Attwood and Broadmead Primary Schools.

We have also had enquiries from staff working at children's centres and also at the FJC the Family Justice Centre.

A number of council workers have been **upgraded to "key workers"** on a temporary basis.

Restructures and Reorganisations

All **restructures** are on pause unless it is a case of business continuity then they will consider how best to proceed.

Employer relations – All disciplinarys, grievances and investigations will be put on hold unless it is necessary that they have to go ahead and then they will liaise with the member of staff and their representative to discuss the best way forward and this may be done by Skype or Zoom.

Pay review – The NJC pay claim for 2020/21 is still currently under review with the Local Government Association after they rejected the union's request for a 10% increase in pay for all staff. However, a new offer of 2.75% was made instead which has yet to be considered by the unions.

If you have any specific concerns about the coronavirus please contact your Line Manager first and then if you still need support please feel free to contact us.

Also please refer to the UNISON web site where there are regular updated about the coronavirus. <https://www.unison.org.uk/coronavirus-rights-work/> . There is sector specific advice for Education, Healthcare, social care, government and workers and police staff.

Meanwhile Stay Safe and Keep Well. Protect the NHS and Save Lives.

Other News Items



In April, Keir Starmer became the new leader of the Labour Party. He had been backed by UNISON during his election process. Angela Rayner has become Deputy Leader and Chair of the Labour Party and she was also backed by UNISON. I attended the **Women's Conference** in February at Bournemouth where I had the opportunity to meet Angela. See photo left. Included in the motions debated were "Our NHS – not a bargaining chip on trade deals" and "Women & climate change." Also discussed were Brexit & equal pay, a women's menopause policy and to recognise domestic violence as a work place issue.

"Bring it on, Boris, bring it on" was the defiant message from Christina McAnea when she addressed the Women' Conference.



Our **Croydon UNISON AGM** took place on Thursday 20th February 2020 at Ruskin House in the Cedar Hall with light snacks served at both sessions. Thank you to all our members who attended. We now have a new Chairman Kieran Gilmore who replaces Kai Pokawa. I would like to thank Kai for all his hard work supporting the branch while Chairman and as chair of the Black Members Support Group for putting me forward for the **Nelson Mandela Award** which I was officially presented with at this year's Black Member's Conference at the end of January.

I would also like to thank Sally Tsoukaris, our Regional Organiser who supported the branch until the late autumn for everything, and to wish her every success in her future endeavours.

I would like to welcome Louise O'Hara who attended the AGM along with our previous regional officer Greta Farian who filled in temporarily during the period of Sally leaving and finding a replacement. A big thank you to Greta.

International Women's Day was on Sunday 8th March.



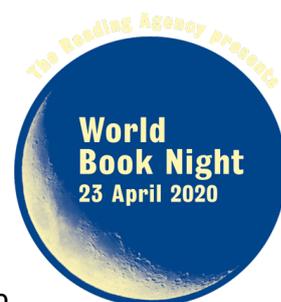
Sadly, **our social evenings and quarterly quiz nights** at Ruskin House have been put on hold due to the government restrictions on holding public events. But when restrictions are relaxed we hope to continue with them.

Our Winter Quiz took place on the 27th February. Yvonne donated a number of prizes for the event. A big thank you to Jean Bowes who stood in for Yvonne Green, our Quiz Master who had to attend another meeting for part of the evening. Also to Robert Newman who provided the picture round. One of our raffle winners is shown in the photo opposite. Proceeds of the raffle go towards the Ruskin House Restoration Fund and the UNISON's charity There for You.

World Book Night 2020

The branch was successful in our application to be a giver for **World Book Night**, normally held on the 21st April. The book we successfully applied for was *Diversify* by June Sarpong. However, delivery of all books have been on hold for now but we hope that a delivery will be made later in the year and we can hold an event to give books out to members.

Meanwhile World Book Night 2020 is connecting a nation in isolation by going digital, as they modify plans due to Covid-19. They are encouraging the nation to share in the pleasure of enjoying a book – in print, in or in audio. Join in their Reading Hour, taking time out to read alone or with others. And share a book with family, friends or colleagues, by giving recommendations, encouraging someone to join the library or gifting a book. Find out more about how they are adapting their plans at <https://worldbooknight.org/>



Mental Health

It is important to look after our mental health during the current situation with increased pressure on all of us. This may be while working on the front line, in self-isolation due to being in contact with someone with the virus, or working at home without any other direct contact from family members, friends or colleagues. Please refer to

<https://learning.unison.org.uk/2020/03/30/unison-learning-for-mental-health-and-wellbeing/>

The Mind web site also gives advice.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

Branch office Information

Our new web site is now live. However we still hoping to recruit a volunteer to help us keep it up to date due to the pressure in the Branch Office with general enquiries and other administrative matters. Visit <https://croydon.unison.site>

If you need advice in the workplace please contact your local Representative in the first instance. You can find a list of all our representatives and their contact numbers and their email addresses listed on our local Branch website.

At present branch staff are working from home so please contact us by email if possible and we will endeavour to get back to you as soon as possible. The Branch office does normally have a voice mail and this is checked on a regular basis, but we are unable to pick these messages up remotely at present.



Don't get angry - get active!

Have you ever thought about being a steward? We are always looking to welcome new Reps into the branch and this could be a role you might be interested in pursuing.

The Branch will organise full training for you, both from UNISON and the TUC as a Rep you are entitled to time off to train. We would not expect you to carry out any representations or to support your colleagues until you have carried out training.

Our most experienced Stewards and officers are also on hand to support you. Whether you work in the public or private Sector we need you! If you would like to find out more about the role, please email the Branch Office.



Are you receiving?

If you are not receiving emails that our sent out from time to time from UNISON and the branch, please contact the Branch Office by phone or email branchoffice@croydonunison.co.uk and your details will be updated.

Proud to be in UNISON

Stay Safe and Keep Well. Protect the NHS and Save Lives.

The UNISON Year 2020/21

Please note dates below postponed until further notice due to Covid 19 – watch this space

June 2020

Local Government Conference:
Sun 14th – Mon 15th June 2020
Brighton Centre

National Delegate Conference:
Tues 16th - Fri 19th June
Brighton Centre

August 2020

Croydon Retired Members Re-Union
and AGM – Ruskin House
Thurs 13th August

October 2020

Retired Member's Conference:
Tues 13th – Wed 14th
Bournemouth

November 2020

Disabled Member's Conference: Sat
2nd – Mon 4th November Brighton

LGBT Conference: Fri 13th – Sun
15th November Brighton

January 2021

Black Members Conference:
To be confirmed

February 2021

Women's Conference:
To be confirmed

Branch AGM:
Ruskin House
To be confirmed