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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

National Pensioners Convention (NPC):

<http://npcuk.org>

Follow your branch:

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

Twitter: @ucu-em-rmb

Please join the new Facebook Group at:

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

Branch Meeting

Tuesday 12th November 2024, 11.00am

The Red Lion
24 High Street
Kegworth
Leicestershire
DE74 2DA

At 12.00:

Howard Stevenson

“The future of post-18 education under the new Government”.



1. Future Branch Meetings

The Branch meets three times a year. Meetings focus on important issues for UCU pensioners and provide a chance to talk with other retired members. The next three meetings are scheduled as follows:

Tuesday November 12th 2024

The Red Lion

24 High Street, Kegworth, Leicestershire,
DE74 2DA.

Tuesday 4th February 2025

The Mechanics Institute

3 North Sherwood Street, Nottingham,
NG1 4EZ.

This meeting will include the Branch AGM

Wednesday 9th April 2025

The Mechanics Institute.

2. Report from the East Midlands HE Sector Committee Meeting.

This meeting was held online on 21 September 2024

The President Elect, Maria Chondrogianni, attended the meeting as a guest. The HEC had not yet met so that there was no report. Instead, the main focus of the meeting was on cuts to staffing and the impact of those on workloads which were already difficult to juggle. Worst affected were currently Lincoln and Northampton, but staff at other universities were expecting VR schemes to open, at the latest when student numbers were known. Nevertheless, all universities reported that staff who left were not being replaced, and some had savings targets in place. This had, of course, an impact on remaining staff whose workloads increased further. The President Elect stated that workloads would be a national priority for the Union in 2024/5.

A discussion took place regarding the timing of future meetings. Not many Branches had responded to a survey sent out by the Regional Office on the matter, but the pre-1992 universities had a clear preference for not meeting on a Saturday. A decision was, however, deferred until the full Committee had discussed the matter.

A Branch delegate meeting had been called for 24 September to discuss the final offer of the UCEA. This was nowhere close to what the Unions had asked for. A short discussion ensued mainly on the terminology, which was often obscure to those who were not closely involved in Union matters. It was suggested that it would be helpful to produce a glossary of terms.

Nottingham University will hold a memorial event for Agnes Flues in November. Details will follow as soon as they are available.

Report from the East Midlands Regional Committee, held online on 21 September 2024

The first part of the meeting was a joint session with the West Midlands to remember Agnes Flues who passed away in early August. Colleagues from her Branch, the Region, and the NEC paid tribute to a colleague who will be much missed.

There are a number of vacancies on the Regional Committee and the Committee asked the Regional Official to write to Branches to see whether members were willing to fill these positions.

A report from the NEC had been sent. The notion of a hybrid Congress was discussed as the report had some reservations regarding this format. It seemed, however, to the Committee that a hybrid would widen opportunities for attendance.

Discussions in the FE Sector revolved around pay, especially in view of the fact that the Government so far refuses to fund an uplift in FE pay. The gap between secondary and further education is therefore set to grow, but also the inequalities within the FE Sector. Workloads continue to be an issue of concern. UCU is organising a [petition for FE](#) and members are asked to sign and share it. (If you haven't signed the petition yet, you can do so by clicking on the link.)

After some discussion, it was decided that HE Sector meetings would be held on a Wednesday afternoon, but Regional Committees would still take place on a Saturday morning, followed by the FE Sector meeting. The next Regional Committee will be held on 8 February 2025.

Harry Ziegler

[than-peers-across-the-education-sector-says-new-report/](#)

3. AoC Offer fails to address FE Pay 'Chasm'

The 'hugely disappointing' pay recommendation for 2024/5 'just won't make up for years of below-inflation awards or remedy the £9k pay gap between school and college teachers' said Jo Grady, UCU General Secretary, in response to a measly 2.5% pay offer by the AoC.

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/13749/UCU-response-to-disappointing-further-education-pay-recommendation>

Indeed, according to a new study by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER): 'Teachers in Further Education (FE) colleges may earn nearly a quarter less than teachers in schools.' Further pay gaps are revealed when comparing FE teachers to their peers in the engineering and digital sectors (11%) and construction (3%). It is not surprising then that there are shortages of teaching staff in these areas. Furthermore, the report reveals unsustainable levels of drop-out, despite respondents lauding many of the virtues of the profession, with an astonishing 50% of teachers in these sectors leaving the profession within three years - pay, workload, and onerous bureaucracy cited as the main issues. The report, echoing UCU, calls for an injection of funding into FE to enable colleges to 'at least match teacher-pay in secondary schools' as well as a long-term strategy to reduce workloads.

Despite its frankly insulting offer, even the AoC has been forced to strengthen its rhetoric, with Pepe Di'Iasio, General Secretary, saying "Our colleges are starved of the funding they require and they are unable to offer salaries which match those of school teachers or the private sector. This means they frequently struggle to recruit staff with industry-specific training skills. The new government has made matters worse by failing to extend to colleges the funding recently allocated for the school teachers' pay award for 2024/25." See full FE Week report at

<https://www.fenews.co.uk/fe-voices/further-education-teachers-paid-23-per-cent-less->

UCU's pay claim for 2024/5 (see below) seeks to start to redress the staggering 40% loss of real-terms pay over the last 10 years, as well as seeking a return to national bargaining. The new government, badged as 'Labour', has promised nothing financially tangible for FE in its manifesto or its first few months in office. Amongst broad brush promises about reforming the skills agenda and apprenticeship levy, and improving integration between the FE and HE sectors there has been, to date, one thing stated for certain. There will be no new money.



UCU calls for 'New Deal for FE'

UCU, meanwhile, has launched its new campaign strategy, calling for a 'new deal' for the sector. This follows a decision by last April's Special FE Sector conference at which proposals for a nationally aggregated ballot for strike action were abandoned in favour of a campaign which, it is hoped, will encourage local branches to organise and build around a set of key demands.

This is a reflection of the varying strengths of branches around the country – a situation created, of course, by the incorporation of colleges and the end of national bargaining – measures designed to weaken the effectiveness of union organisation. Thus, it was felt that UCU is not yet ready to achieve fundamental change at sector level but should concentrate on active branch building. While there have been some successful local deals this year (e.g. 'up to 12.8%' at Myescough College) following local ballots and strike action, the picture is often bleaker elsewhere. It is hoped that members can unite around the union's demands and its petition (see below), which

will also form the basis of negotiations with the government and AoC.

Whilst UCU General Secretary Jo Grady has welcomed new Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson's mood music as a 'breath of fresh air' she is also right to say: 'We now need to see these warm words backed up by hard cash. Labour will not deliver a decade of national renewal without massive public investment in our colleges and universities. Skills gaps in critical industries will not be filled so long as English college teachers are paid 23% less than their counterparts in schools. It is our further education members who will enable the green jobs of the future, providing essential retraining and upskilling.

'A thriving post-16 education sector is a precondition for the success of Labour's core objectives in government, from energy security to opportunity for all. That must be reflected in the Budget.' Indeed!

UCU's key demands are:

- 10%/£3000 pay rise and parity with schoolteachers within 3 years, with a minimum starting salary of £30,000
- Reform of the pay spine and closure of equality gaps
- National agreements on workload
- A return to national bargaining

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/NewDealForFE>

The petition: <https://newdealforfe.org.uk/>

The 2024/5 pay claim

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/13535/Further-education-unions-pay-claim-202425>

Paul Wilkinson

4. The Logic of the Winter Fuel Payment

We have been told that there will be tough decisions, but they will fall on the those with the "broadest shoulders". So, the removal of the winter fuel payment should only fall on wealthier pensioners, but sadly some two million poor pensioners, using DWP figures, will lose out due to the cliff edge effect of using the criterion of eligibility for Pension Credit (PC) which only covers the very poorest. Steve Webb, the former pensions minister argues

that about five out of every six pensioners living below the "poverty line" could be at risk of being stripped of their winter fuel payments.

These, however, are hard times and a massive £1.5 billion will be saved. Now let us look at the figures behind the headlines. Naturally only Government figures will be used. These figures suggest that the average cost of PC plus winter fuel payment is £3,900. The number of eligible pensioners not claiming PC (it has the lowest take up rate of means tested benefits) is 880,000. The Government, we are assured is making titanic efforts to sign up these people. Just a little maths: £3,900 times 880,000 equals £3.4 billion! Woe, woe and again woe! What a catastrophe, as the black hole has actually increased. Treasury figures reassure us that, despite said titanic efforts to sign up the very poorest pensioners to PC, a maximum of 95,000 of the 880,000 non-recipients will sign up. Hooray, this is only just £370 million of extra expenditure and the sacred fiscal rules are just a bit safer. Needless to say, further cuts to benefits will not be austerity just tough decisions.

The Government has argued that increases in the State pension will make up for any loss in winter fuel payment. The IFS 'however, has recently pointed out that average pensioner benefits other than state pensions fell by 15% from 2011 to 2022 mostly due to rising state and private pension incomes reducing their entitlements. One hand gives and one takes.

Why is the take up rate for PC so bad. One possibility, and I speak from the experience of many years volunteering at the CAB, is that the "user friendly" application form is 22 pages with 243 questions and many of the answers require facts that are not at the finger-tips of the average pensioner, let alone the poorest. Independent Age's chief executive Joanna Elson explained that the scale of questions "can sometimes be complex, and gathering this amount of personal information can be daunting". She also said older people struggling financially "may be experiencing stress and anxiety which can make a long form difficult to tackle".

A further problem is that, after being deafened for years by clamour about benefit scroungers, many pensioners are too proud to apply for

selective benefits. Only universal benefits reach all. Some benefits must be selective, such as for specific disability. The problem with a further drive to selectivity will weaken social bonds and lose the sense of a collective community. Imagine, and this takes little imagination, a situation where our NHS is so enfeebled that those who can pay will just go private. How long before those people get fed up with paying not only for their own health needs but for an NHS that they cannot use. The prophet of doom, Margaret Thatcher, might be proved right and there is no such thing as society.

Julian Atkinson

5. The Darzi Report on the NHS

Ara Warkes Darzi, Baron Darzi of Denham is an Armenian-British surgeon, academic, and politician. Lord Darzi holds the Paul Hamlyn Chair of Surgery at Imperial College. In July 2024, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care commissioned Darzi to conduct an immediate and independent investigation of the NHS. His report provides insight into the current performance of the NHS across England and the challenges facing the healthcare system. Darzi considered the “available data and intelligence” to assess:

- patient access to healthcare
- the quality of healthcare being provided
- the overall performance of the health system

In line with the terms of reference of the investigation, Darzi only considered the NHS in England. UK-wide analysis was occasionally used when making international comparisons.

See:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-investigation-of-the-nhs-in-england>

This article is based on the report’s analysis and conclusions, with which the author finds himself to be broadly sympathetic. I must emphasise that this is not the same as agreeing with all his diagnoses and conclusions! This article attempts to summarise some of the issues and the arising recommendations.

In what Darzi describes as “an unprecedented act of transparency”, the report was published

with an accompanying technical annex containing over 330 analyses that his team and he commissioned for this investigation. Thus, Darzi concludes: “The issues are laid bare for all to see. And from this shared starting point, I look forward to our collective endeavour to turn it around for the people of this country, and to secure its future for generations to come.”

We can probably all agree that the National Health Service has significant problems. Public satisfaction, which stood at a record high in 2009, is now at its lowest ever. The first step to rebuilding public trust and confidence in the NHS is to be completely honest about where it stands.

The state of the NHS is not entirely a result of what has happened within the health service. The nation’s health has deteriorated and that impacts the service. Overall life expectancy increased in the 2000s, but plateaued during the 2010s, before decreasing during the Covid-19 pandemic. It has started to rise again, but the absolute and relative proportion of our lives spent in ill-health has increased. Many social determinants of health, such as poor-quality housing, low income, insecure employment, have moved in the wrong direction over the past 15 years leading to the NHS facing increased demands. There has been an increase in the number of people with multiple long-term conditions, and in those with mental health needs, particularly among children and young people. Public health funding has been reduced by more than 25% since 2015 and the country’s main public health institution was abolished, split into two, during the pandemic.

Darzi concludes that the NHS is in critical condition, but that its vital signs remain strong. The NHS is continuing to struggle with the aftermath of the pandemic. Its managerial capacity and capability have been degraded, and the trust and goodwill of many frontline staff have been lost. The service has been chronically weakened by a lack of capital investment which has significantly lagged behind comparable countries. It has been suggested that this is primarily a failure of NHS management. This is not so. The NHS is an essential public service and so, when under

pressure, has focused on “keeping the show on the road”. Arguably, better management decisions could have been taken along the way, but Darzi is convinced that this would have only made a marginal difference to the state that the NHS is in today.

Darzi found nothing that draws into question the principles of a health service that is taxpayer funded, free at the point of use, and based on need rather than the ability to pay. With the clear exception of the United States, he asserts that every advanced country has some form of universal health coverage. Other health system models are more expensive, even if their funding may often be more stable. It is not a question, therefore, of whether we can afford the NHS. Rather, we cannot afford to not have the NHS, therefore it is imperative that we turn the situation around. It has taken more than a decade for the NHS to fall into such disrepair so restoring it will also take years rather than months. However, Darzi has no doubt that significant progress is possible, but feels that it is unlikely that standards can be restored within one parliamentary term. Darzi was asked to identify major themes for the forthcoming 10-year health plan. He identified the following, which will need to be considered alongside strategies to improve the nation’s health and reforms to social care:

- *Re-engage staff and re-empower patients.* Despite all the challenges and low morale, NHS staff are profoundly passionate and motivated to raise the quality of care for patients. Their talents must be harnessed to make positive change. The best change empowers patients to take as much control of their care as possible.
- *Lock in the shift of care closer to home by hardwiring financial flows.* General practice, mental health and community services will need to expand and adapt to the needs of those with long-term conditions whose prevalence is growing rapidly as the population ages. Financial flows must lock-in this change irreversibly or it will not happen.
- *Simplify and innovate care delivery for a neighbourhood NHS.* The best way to work as a team is to work in a team: we need to embrace new multidisciplinary models of care that bring together

primary, community and mental health services.

- *Drive productivity in hospitals.* Acute care providers will need to bring down waiting lists by radically improving their productivity. That means fixing flow through better operational management, capital investment in modern buildings and equipment, and re-engaging and empowering staff.
- *Tilt towards technology.* There must be a major tilt towards technology to unlock productivity. In particular, the hundreds of thousands of NHS staff working outside hospitals urgently need the benefits of digital systems. There is enormous potential in AI to transform care and for life sciences breakthroughs to create new treatments.
- *Contribute to the nation’s prosperity.* With the NHS budget at £165 billion this year, the health service’s productivity is vital for national prosperity. Moreover, the NHS must rebuild its capacity to get more people off waiting lists and back into work. At the same time, it should better support British biopharmaceutical companies.
- *Reform to make the structure deliver.* While a top-down reorganisation of NHS England and Integrated Care Boards is neither necessary nor desirable, there is more work to be done to clarify roles and accountabilities, ensure the right balance of management resources in different parts of the structure, and strengthen key processes such as capital approvals. Change will only be successful if the NHS can recover its capacity to deliver plans and strategies as well as to make them.

As Keep our NHS Public says, Darzi has thrown down the gauntlet. Will the Government rise to the challenge or will it mistakenly conclude that the wrong treatments ‘reform’ and further austerity are what is required. If so, this would be a huge tragedy for patients, staff and the NHS.

See: <https://keepournhspublic.com/darzi-report-will-government-write-wrong-prescription/>

For Keep Our NHS Public, the three 'big shifts that are needed are:

- *away from* underfunding and to funding the NHS to succeed
- *away from* private outsourcing and to building back publicly provided NHS services
- *away from* fragmentation of services and to a reuniting of the national NHS

together with a fourth important parallel 'shift':

- the establishment of a national service for care, support and independent living

I believe that we can agree with these conclusions. We can only solve the crisis in secondary hospital-based care if we have a properly funded National Care Service, to work alongside the National Health Service.

[Rob Kirkwood](#)

6. The Long Crisis of Social Care

It is a truth universally acknowledged that adult social care is in crisis and that this must be fixed. If it is not, there is little chance of getting the NHS back on an even keel due to the problem of getting the elderly safely out of hospitals and into secure accommodation. In 2011, the Dilnot Report proposed that an £86,000 cap on nursing costs would be placed on the amount a person paid. After spending £86,000, costs would be paid for by local authorities. Since then, a number of thorough and slow reviews have been carried out (aka "kicking the can up the road"). Despite commissioning the review, David Cameron indefinitely postponed its implementation. Theresa May announced plans to cap costs in advance of the 2017 election, but it was dropped. Boris Johnson had pledged to bring in a system in his first speech in front of Downing Street, like the measure Dilnot had suggested. It wasn't.

Wes Streeting had pledged a cap on costs in July. He said: "One of the things that we've committed to is the cap on care costs and it is due to come in. I've wanted to give the system the certainty this side of the election, of knowing we're not planning to come in and

pick that and scrap that". Something has to be done! However, Rachel Reeves resiled from the pledge. The similarity between promise and performance lies in the fact that they both start with the letter "p". However, Labour has promised, for some time after a future review, both a cost cap and a new pay agreement for social care workers, who were not included in the recent NHS pay settlement.

Sir Andrew Dilnot commented that he was "staggered" that Labour broke a promise to continue with the reforms. "To fix social care it needs around £12 billion extra per year to bring it up to the funding list since 2010. This would pay for more better paid and trained staff. We don't need a Royal Commission to tell us this... This isn't the first time that social care and people needing social care and providing it have been disappointed in the breaking of a promise," Sir Andrew said. The amount of money to reform the system is very large and it depends upon the priorities of the successive Governments as to whether it is provided. Postponing a solution with yet another review merely allows social care to worsen and costs to grow. A recent Age UK report finds older people are often struggling due to insufficient access to high quality NHS treatment, as well as social care, and that the system is currently under-prepared for population ageing.

Long-standing problems were greatly exacerbated during the pandemic and despite some recovery since then, it has not yet proved possible to arrest a decline in capacity, service availability and performance, with extremely worrying implications for older people and their families and unpaid carers. This is all the more concerning in light of a rising older population, the growth of which will accelerate still further over the next decade, increasing by a projected 4.3 million by 2044.

The social care sector is struggling to fill vacancies in almost every key adult social care role. Furthermore, the numbers of district nurses reduced by 17.5% between 2014 and 2023 – horrific, given how central their role is in treating older people at home for problems like pressure sores, which can develop into serious health problems requiring acute care. Significant numbers of emergency hospital admissions could be avoided if the right kind of

help was provided earlier on. The elderly become stuck in a hospital bed because of a lack of community-based care, creating huge problems for hospital staff and undermining their own chances of making a good recovery. The Institute for Fiscal Studies study of October 2024 produced a sober study of the issue. Around one-in-seven 65-year-olds can expect to incur lifetime care costs of more than £100,000, but individuals have limited ability to protect themselves against extremely high care costs. The number of older people receiving state-funded care in England has dropped by 10% since 2014–15 due to tightening eligibility criteria, and public spending on adult social care failed to keep pace with demographic pressures. (Office for Budget Responsibility projects that UK-wide public spending on adult social care would need to increase by 3.1% per year in real terms over the next decade.)

Adult social care is the responsibility of 153 local authorities in England, increasingly funded by local council tax revenues since 2010. In the absence of a well-functioning local government finance system, there is a risk of a severe mismatch between local funding and local needs. This will be of particular importance if the government introduces a 'National Care Service' with consistent service provision across the country.

Immigration policy significantly affects the adult social care workforce in the UK, with a growing proportion of employees from non-EU countries, now comprising 16% of the workforce, while EU worker representation has decreased. Monthly applications for Health and Care Worker visas have fallen from 18,300 in August 2023 to 2,300 in August 2024. The new government has given no indication that it plans to reverse the previous government's tightening of eligibility for these visas. If the government wants to decrease the number of migrants entering the care sector, it must be prepared either to accept a smaller workforce with a deterioration in care quality or to boost the funding allocated to local authorities to raise wages and attract more domestic workers. Unions must insist that both migrants and local workers are fairly paid.

Successfully implementing various proposed policies and initiatives for the sector – such as the 'Fair Cost of Care' reforms and the new 'Fair Pay Agreement' aimed at raising fees for providers and wages for care workers, respectively – will need additional funding from the government. During the election campaign, the Labour Party promised to introduce a 'National Care Service' and a 'Fair Pay Agreement' for adult social care. It is now the task of the unions and user groups to campaign to turn promises into reality. This Government is slightly more open to such pressure. Failure to adequately fund will cost more, both in human misery and monetary costs, than implementing a serious programme of reform.

[Julian Atkinson](#)

7. UCU Retired Members Branch

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

Our branch has been meeting since 2008 and now has well 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
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