

UCU West Midlands Newsletter



March Against the Far Right

On the 28th of March half a million people marched through London to take a stand against the rise of far right ideology.

This was the biggest march against the right in British history, and among the protestors were several of our West Midlands members who carried our lovely (and very heavy!) banner.



Meetings

On Saturday 18 April a hybrid meeting of the West Midlands Regional Committee Meeting and AGM took place online and at the Regional Office in Edmund House, Birmingham. The meeting elected new regional officers for the coming year and made preparations for UCU annual Congress, which this year will take place online and at the Harrogate Convention Centre from Wednesday 27 May - Friday 29 May 2026.

The next Regional Committee meeting will take place on the 19th of September.

The FE lobby of Parliament took place on Monday, with members speaking to their MPs on issues being tackled in the New Deal for FE campaign.



Events

- [International Worker's Memorial Day Birmingham](#) - Tuesday 28th of April at 12:30, Birmingham Cathedral
- [International Worker's Memorial Day Coventry](#) - Tuesday 28th of April at 12:00, Coventry Cathedral- Cathedral ruins
- [International Worker's Memorial Day Wolverhampton](#) - 28th of April at 12.30, Workers' Memorial Day Tree, St Peters Square
- For other IWMD events, please see the TUC website: [TUC IWMD](#)
- Oppose Tommy Robinson March - 16th of May, Central London. Book your coach from Birmingham [here](#)
- Black Activist weekend - 6th- 7th of June, Hillscourt Conference centre, Birmingham. Register [here](#)
- Solidarity Against Hate - The Birmingham Race Impact Group (BRIG) is a consortium of activists and academics who have worked tirelessly to promote racial justice in Birmingham. You can find out more at <https://www.wearebrig.co.uk/>



Disputes

Disputes continue at City of Wolverhampton College and South and City College Birmingham as part of the New Deal for FE Campaign.

SCCB will be taking further strike action Look out for further updates and details of picket line venues and other ways to show your support.

The City of Wolverhampton College UCU branch is currently in productive negotiations which have resulted in a 4% pay offer and the establishment of a working group to produce a workload allocation model for implementation by the end of this academic year.

A note from the Retired Members' committee

When you retire, you can choose to remain in your workplace branch or move to the Regionally-based Retired Members' Branch (WMRMB).

We can offer solidarity and practical support to branches in struggle - for example, joining picket lines, recruitment drives, helping with Get The Vote Out (GTVO) activities in ballot periods, and maintaining activity and interest in wider issues such as equality, anti-racism/anti-fascism, climate emergency, defence of public services, etc.

WMRMB have 3 hybrids meetings a year, and maintain a lively WhatsApp group sharing information about disputes, campaigns and activities across the region.

You can get in touch by emailing the branch secretary Babs Gisborne: babsegl@aol.com

West Midlands Regional Team

I thought I'd use the opportunity of this newsletter to reintroduce our regional team and give you a bit of an idea of what each of our roles entails:

Regional Official – Anne O'Sullivan: Anne manages the West Midlands team. This includes responsibility for supporting and directing team members; conducting collective bargaining and negotiations with management in branches where she is regional lead; oversight of all industrial action requests and processes; advising and supporting branch reps with member casework including applications for access to the union's legal services scheme; co-ordinating support for recruitment and organizing activities in branches across the region, and oversight of the Regional Office premises, including facilitating Regional Committee meetings and branch briefings/training events.

Regional Support Officials – Rebecca Stewart and Jane Inskip: Rebecca and Jane each conduct collective bargaining and negotiations with management in branches where they are the regional lead; advising and supporting branch reps with member casework including assisting with preparation of applications for access to the union's legal services scheme; advising on workplace policies and procedures in the branches where they are the regional lead.

Caseworker (part-time) – Francis Clarke: Francis supports members in private training providers/institutions where UCU is not recognized and there are no UCU reps; he also advises branch reps about more complex casework.

Please note: If you are a member in need of casework support, please contact [your branch](#). If you aren't in a branch, you can email westmidlands@ucu.org.uk.

Branch Development Organiser – Laura Lewis Alvarado (me!): I work with branches to support them in growing their membership, gaining visibility in and out of the workplace,, organising campaigns, GTVO activities during ballot periods, and supporting new reps. And of course production and distribution of regional newsletters like this one!

Regional Administrator – Rhonda Clougher: last but definitely not least, Rhonda manages the West Midlands inbox; handles the membership system; administrates rep training courses; files and processes legal applications; and handles the admin for our office; and generally keeps us all in good order! Rhonda is often the first port-of-call for reps and members via the West Midlands inbox

We're a region of over 10,000 members across 73 branches, so with only six of us in the regional office, it does get very busy.

Becoming a UCU rep

UCU can only function thanks to the amazing work our reps do on a voluntary basis to improve the working conditions for members in their workplaces. This work reps do can look very different depending on their specific role, but all of these roles are hugely important and help keep the union strong and growing.

Casework is one of the main issues we face on a day-to-day basis, and having caseworkers in our branches is invaluable in supporting our members. However, rep work does not only consist of casework which can seem intimidating to take on if you don't have much union experience.

However, there are many other branch roles that might feel a bit easier to step into at first. These roles can vary in different branches, but here are some examples:

- **Branch secretary:** you will usually be in charge of setting up meetings, taking minutes and circulating information about ongoing campaigns to members. You may also have charge of an inbox where members write to request support, which you will delegate to other rep/committee members.
- **Treasurer:** you will be in charge of branch funds, keeping the books and sorting out expenses.
- **Membership secretary:** you will be given access to the UCU membership system and will be in charge of obtaining membership lists for your branch and making sure members are up to date with their details.
- **Health and safety rep:** you will carry out health and safety assessments at your workplace and advising reps and members on health and wellbeing related issues.
- **Equalities rep:** if you are part of a minoritised group, you can represent your colleagues in equalities issues, advise on workplace policies and get involved with equalities groups across UCU.
- **Environmental rep:** in this role you will be able to raise awareness on environmental issues in the workplace and ensure there is a place for these concerns within the union's bargaining and negotiating agenda with the employer.
- **Union learning rep:** you will offer advice on training and development in local collective bargaining agreements and can offer members individual advice and guidance on development issues

We offer training for all new and existing reps, so you won't be going into this without help and guidance. And if you do want to become a caseworker, we have plenty of training and resources.

If you are interested in any of the above rep roles, please contact your UCU branch, or email me at llewisalvarado@ucu.org.uk

Training

We're running a variety of activist training training in the Midlands and in our head office in London

April

Job Evaluations

28th April- In Person

May

Reps: 1

12,13,14th of May - Online

Challenging Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

21st of May - Online

June

Workload Rep Training 2

26th June (half day) - Online

[To sign up, please visit the UCU activist education programme page](#)