



UNISON Membership Number 624466

Dear Branch Secretary,

I am asking for your Branch nomination for the upcoming NEC election. I am re standing for the Female Health Seat.

I work within the NHS as a Clinical Health Support Worker in Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust. I have been active within my UNISON Branch for many years and I am currently the Equalities Officer and an active Health and Safety Rep. I have a wealth of experience in representing UNISON members at all levels, including when elected into the NEC Female Health Seat, National Women's Committee, and the National Disabled Members Committee.

I am passionate about our NHS, our union, and mental health services. I have worked on UNISON's HCA campaign, which has seen HCA's lifted from band 2 to band 3. I've also worked on safer staffing and embedding true flexible working that benefits our members, rather than a system that is more employer orientated.

I believe my experience puts me in good stead to listen to, support and represent our members during these unprecedented times and I am asking for your support in re-nominating me for the Health Service group Female Seat on the NEC.

Defending OUR NHS

I am immensely proud of our activists and members all around the UK and the work they continue to do in defending and fighting for our NHS. This has been highlighted more than ever over the last year as we see demands on NHS services at unprecedented levels, putting enormous pressure on our members.

There is no doubt that the Tories are starving our NHS of cash. The NHS is in crisis, at a level that I have never experienced. We're now entering thirteen years of Tory austerity as they continue to squeeze more from our budgets and pay lip service to the growing crisis in Health and Social Services. They have no positive plan for the NHS or the workforce.

Working in mental health, I see every day the impact of cuts to our services, patients denied access or having to travel out of the area to get the support they need. It is UNISON leading the campaigns to defend our health services, within the workplace and within our communities.

One Union – One Team for Our NHS

The strength of our union is that we see staff within the NHS as a family, a network of support across all occupational groups, banding structures and employers – we look after each other, and we are *One Team*, however, this government and some employers are trying to divide us.

This is evident in the divisive language the Tories use when referring to “front line” and “back office” staff and in the growing privatisation agenda within the NHS through the rise of SubCos where our members are fighting to remain NHS. I have and will continue to defend the NHS against SubCos and privatisation. We have shown we are not afraid to take strike action where needed and will continue to fight to end the internal market within the NHS, cease the privatisation agenda and fight to bring services back in-house. As our health service becomes even more fragmented and with the increase in devolution we must ensure there is no race to the bottom with regard to pay, terms and conditions.

Continuing the Fight for Fair Pay

Pay has been a central theme of UNISON's campaigning work during 2022. The government imposed a below-inflation pay award onto NHS staff, this came after years of wage stagnation that has seen our real-term pay reduced significantly. UNISON balloted members regarding industrial action. We spoke to thousands of our members and used a new text messaging system.

We knew it would be challenging to meet the 50% turnout threshold imposed by the government and it was disappointing that we fell short of meeting the threshold required in many Trusts – meaning not enough UNISON members returned their ballot papers. We need to understand why members felt unable to participate in the industrial action ballot. however, of those that did vote, the overwhelming majority voted for industrial action. It was the highest turnout we've ever had for an industrial ballot within health.

Your voice has certainly been heard and our campaign for an inflation-busting pay rise is certainly not over! We know the government are talking about capping public sector pay in 2023 and UNISON is ready to challenge this.

I send solidarity to all those who have taken industrial action in 2022 and stand ready to take further action in 2023. As the government continually refuse to negotiate, and, I can only see more people joining the industrial action.

I applaud the work Scotland has done with the response from their members in pay deals, and, fully support the ongoing work in Northern Ireland for a pay claim where they are working to rule. In Cymru/Wales where they fought a successful campaign regarding a workforce strategy for health and Social care. It is vital we continue to work as a whole union to secure the best deal across all nations as we move forward in 2023, united for all our NHS workers and the public.

Our Branches and our Members – Our Strength

As a Branch activist, I see every day how our increasing workload is impacting our members and our activists, Tory austerity has led to an increase in disciplinary action, grievances, sickness absence, and capability meetings, as well as a rise in bullying and harassment cases. All of these are still major concerns for our members on top of the significant changes to their working practices as staff shortages lead to concerns over safe staffing levels. Recruitment and retention are major concerns as we look to how our ageing workforce is replenished. Levels into our student programmes have diminished since the removal of the bursary. Costs to Trusts for the use of bank and agency staff are growing significantly.

We need to ensure that our resources are directed to where members and activists need them most – resources directed to activity that benefits our members, our branches and our union, I Welcome the UNISON College which will support as well as educate our activists and members. We need to ensure priority is given to our branches because they are the grassroots of our union and need the tools to deal with changes quickly.

UNISON is the biggest union, but we must not be complacent. We must work with branches to support recruitment and growth in the number of people active in our workplaces so we can continue to grow. We need more initiatives such as the Branch Support and Organising Fund which is overseen by regions to provide additional support to branches. We know that branches need support for activists to have adequate facility time and grow UNISON in our workplaces. These will be my priorities, member-focused, branch-focused, and delivering for every member. I want to be part of an NEC that will work across the whole union, with our focus on delivering for our members on the issues that matter to them.

We must continue to strengthen our commitment to challenging discrimination and promoting equality in our workplaces and working with our self-organised structures is key to achieving this. The ongoing work within the NHS, of the Workforce Disability Equality Standard and Workforce Race Equality Standard, are supporting our disabled and black members so we are prepared when negotiating with employers.

One Health Team on the NEC

The Health Service Group on the NEC also needs to be a united force that puts the interests of our members ahead of personal interests which is why I am asking you to nominate Michelle England for the other Female Seat along with Gordon McKay for the Male Seat and James Anthony for the General Seat.

I do hope your branch can consider nominating me and should you or your members wish to get in touch my contact details are at the bottom of this page.

In solidarity,

Pat Heron

Northumberland Tyne and Wear Health Trust
UNISON Membership Number 624466

Nominations must be made at a quorate meeting from the 9th of January and submitted before 5 pm on the 13th of February. Nominations must be submitted via the CES online portal at <http://www.cesvotes.com/unisonNEC2023>. Full details can be found at www.unison.org.uk/elections



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