

ancillary

UNISON news for NHS ancillary and
maintenance sector members

matters

Cleaners take centre stage

Conference honours 'vital role'



Two hundred delegates from across the UK assembled in London for a feast of analysis and debate at the November 2009 UNISON Cleaners Conference.

Kicking off with speeches from UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis and health minister Ann Keen MP, the conference placed firmly centre stage the vital importance of cleaning staff in delivering both a safe NHS and quality patient care.

Mr Prentis paid tribute to cleaners as the "first line in infection control" and blasted the drive to designate cleaners as "non-core staff to be sold off to the lowest bidder." In pledging that UNISON would continue to stand up for cleaners against any such attacks, he demanded that privatised services should be brought back in-house.

Ms Keen honoured cleaners as "a very important part of the

healthcare team" and expressed her "highest regard for every one of you." However, the minister also faced some tough questioning from delegates over the government's policies, particularly the inequities of the private finance initiative.

The vast pool of experience, skills and knowledge among cleaning staff then became the focus as workshops moved on to the practical questions

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of how to establish cleaner hospital committees, developing a career framework for cleaners and taking forward the fight for infection control.

In the afternoon, delegates looked at the overwhelming evidence supporting UNISON's case that the size of the cleaning workforce has a critical impact on the incidence of MRSA and the process of contracting out has damaged patient care because of its focus on cost over quality.

Fresh from 19 radio interviews, UNISON national secretary for health Karen Jennings testified to the immense press interest generated by the conference and recounted the value the public place on cleaning staff.

Commenting on the day, West Midlands delegate Mary Locke said

that "we are like a forgotten army," so the conference served a vital purpose in giving "domestics and housekeepers a voice." Meanwhile, West Midlands delegate Pat Usher echoed the comments of many when reflecting that the cleaners from her branch had enjoyed "a wonderful time and were able to meet and speak to many of the cleaners from other regions. They came away with lots of information and most of all the enthusiasm to be able to take the information to their managers. I have never seen such a transformation in a group of staff."

To see a video of the Cleaners Conference and download the presentations made on the day of the conference, go to the UNISON web site at unison.org.uk/healthcare/ancillary



A win at Whipps!

UNISON shop steward Errol Mason was overwhelmingly welcomed back to work by Whipps Cross University Hospital workers in east London this summer, following the union's successful campaign to have him reinstated back into his job.

An active participant in the branch's successful action that secured Agenda for Change for porters, domestic and switchboard staff in 2006, Errol had been removed from site by Healthcare Initial following a request by hospital trust management regarding work audits. He was alleged to have failed to perform his duties to the required standard. He remained on full pay and was faced with being placed "elsewhere in the business". The trust has the right to invoke the third party clause of their contract.

The union responded with a campaign involving all hospital workers and trade unions including protest letter, leaflets and petitions. There were meetings of Healthcare Initial staff called on every shift/department and finally the trust and Healthcare Initial met and reinstated Errol.

Blogs from the front line

The GovToday website has been set up as a public sector "communications channel" on all aspects of government policy and best practice. The site attracts plenty of comments from managers working inside and outside the NHS, but if you would like to join the debate and put the perspective of staff working on the front line of health service delivery, it's simple to register. Just go to www.govtoday.co.uk and click on the registration panel at the bottom right of the home page. Once you have completed the details, you will receive a user name and password, which will allow you to join in the health "blogs" listed in blue on the left of the home page.

Meet the Ancillary and Maintenance Sector Committee

Pat Usher West Midlands rep

I started working for the NHS in 1994 as a part-time courier at Walsall Manor Hospital. I had every intention to stay for just a couple of years, but 15 years later I am still here. The only things that have changed are the Manor Hospital has become Walsall Hospitals Trust and I now work as a porter. This is a job I love doing as I get to meet with our members and it also means I get to hear what's going on in the trust from our members as I'm always out and about.

I joined UNISON as soon as I started at the trust and before that I was a member of NUPE. I decided to get involved in UNISON just a few years ago by first becoming a rep and doing my stage 1 and 2 reps courses and then when I got to know how things worked I stood for the health and safety officer role, which I got and still do today. As an ancillary worker I was determined to let the members in this area know that they could come and talk to me and raise their concerns about health and safety and I would then bring them to the attention of the committee. Through this committee, I have been able to raise many concerns from our members and I will continue to do so.

I have also held the post of branch secretary and welfare officer. I still am the welfare officer and I am finding that in the present climate it's our low-paid workers who are usually in the ancillary sector that need the help, advice and support that this role offers.

I also sit on the following regional and national committees:

- Regional Health Committee
- Regional Council
- National Ancillary and Maintenance Sector Committee.

I have also been trained in job evaluation and job matching for Agenda for Change and regularly sit on panels. On a personal note, I am



particularly proud of just completing my ECDL (European computer driving licence) part 1 and 2, especially as I do not need to use a computer in my job.

I have just added my support to UNISON's A Million Voices campaign, which is something I think all UNISON members should do, either by themselves or as a branch. I think this is very important to let people know that as a union or as an individual we cannot let public services be taken over by private companies whose only agenda is profit.

When I get any free time I spend it with my three grandchildren, who love seeing me struggle trying to keep up with them when we go out for bike rides. I also love going to watch my son banger race at Hednesford Hills and Birmingham Raceway. When I'm not doing any of that, well, like most people who lead busy lives, I relax and read a good book, preferably an autobiography which I love.

Your regional reps on the Ancillary and Maintenance Sector Committee

Eastern:	Vacant
East Midlands:	Sam Godfrey
Greater London:	Len Hockey
Northern:	George Barron
Northern Ireland:	Vacant
North West:	Peter Goodier
Scotland:	Morag Houston
South East:	Tracey Bailey
South West:	Kath Budd
Wales:	Hugh McDyer
West Midlands:	Pat Usher
Yorkshire and Humberside:	Adrian O'Malley
Maintenance Co-optee:	David Griffiths

Hugh McDyer is sector chair and Morag Houston is sector vice chair

Contacts

The full-time officers supporting the Ancillary and Maintenance Sector are Dave Godson (d.godson@unison.co.uk) and Kevin Russell (k.russell@unison.co.uk), who can also be contacted in the UNISON Health Group on 0207 5511418.

a million
voices
for
public
services

UNISON campaigning
for a fairer society

UNISON has more than a million members delivering essential services to the public. Services that protect, enrich and change lives. We want to see changes that put people before profit and public interest before private greed. Add your voice to our campaign to create a fairer society.

To find out more or add your voice to our million voices for public services go to unison.org.uk/million

Keep up to date

Don't forget, you can visit the UNISON website for further information about the ancillary and maintenance sector at unison.org.uk/healthcare/ancillary/index.asp

If you want to make sure that you are notified of the latest news concerning the ancillary and maintenance sector, you can also sign up to receive the sector's e-mail news bulletins. To join, send your e-mail address to Kevin Russell on k.russell@unison.co.uk

Join UNISON

You can join UNISON online today at unison.org.uk/join or call 0845 355 0845.

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Win an Ipod Shuffle

Correctly answer the questions below and you could win an Ipod Shuffle



Which government minister addressed the 2009 UNISON Cleaners Conference?

Who is the general secretary of UNISON?

What is the popular abbreviation for Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus?

Your details:

Name:

UNISON membership number:

Contacts details (telephone number and/or e-mail):

Send your completed entry to:
Ancillary Matters Competition
Health Group
UNISON
London WC1H 9AJ