

Assistant Branch Secretary Report – Clare Lunk

This report surmises key activities since our last Committee meeting in December 2025, covering organising, casework, policy work, consultations, branch operations, and national/regional engagement.

Recruitment – Wiltshire

- Jacky and I visited Swindon Ambulance Station and Great Western Hospital in January 2026 with the purpose of recruiting members, engaging with existing members, and establishing UNISON visibility.
- At Swindon station we encountered staff from a variety of different roles and teams; AVP, frontline operations, SPUECS, and frontline nurses.
- Workplace issues that staff discussed with us included quality of inductions, resourcing issues, scope creep within roles, trepidation towards training requirements for roles, unavailability of vehicles, and dispatching issues.
- We met staff who were members of different unions, existing UNISON members, and some staff who were not with any union. Those who were with another union were not all wholly disengaged from speaking to us; we found some staff wished to speak to us with quiet interest about what UNISON could offer.
- We updated noticeboards whilst we were at Swindon station with UNISON posters, and left joining forms and merchandise for staff. We also spent part of an agreed budget (up to £50) on snacks and food for staff, which were well received, and helped facilitate opening conversations with more reserved members of staff.
- At Great Western Hospital our company was very well received; we gave staff merchandise and food, and considerable thanks were expressed.
- Due to several staff expressing a desire to complete application forms online rather than paper forms we believe 5 new members joined the Branch as a result of our activities.



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- We recommend further visits to Wiltshire to continue this organizing activity, to include other ambulance stations, re-visiting Swindon, and returning to GWH. Break windows are an opportune time to visit stations to ensure footfall.
- Finally, watch out for the Magic Roundabout...hats off to Jacky for navigating it at least twice, and putting up with my singing at the same time!

Consistency, Job Evaluation Policy

- I've completed a number of 'Consistency' panels with HR since being trained in this area of Job Evaluation last year.
- We've identified that SWAST current practice for Consistency deviates in some ways from NHS Employers best practice, however UNISON have been co-creating a new 'Job Evaluation' policy with HR which outlines expected practice and process for all stages of the process, including Consistency, with the aim to bring the process more in line.
- I was part of the in-person meetings which have taken place for the 'Job Evaluation Policy' co-creation; in-person practice for this type of collaboration has proven effective as it enables open discussion, un-rushed negotiation over key wording and process, and relationship building. Do consider requesting in-person collaboration or negotiation opportunities where possible where you feel there may be a similar benefit.

Voluntary Redundancy & MARS

- In January 2026, SWAST launched a Voluntary Redundancy and MARS scheme for staff.
- Prior to the announcement, HR informed UNISON of the proposals to provide a short-notice opportunity for review of their documents and feedback.
- Emma and I worked at pace on reviewing SWAST's proposed communications and FAQ to staff, identifying a number of areas for clarification including roles included in scope, language which was unclear



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- or ambiguous, and signposting information which we feel warranted inclusion.
- Following announcement of the schemes, a number of members approached me directly for advice support and guidance relating to their individual circumstances. We await the outcomes of all decisions.

Casework

- Relevant casework information to share back to the Branch this quarter includes HCPC self-referral queries – to self-refer or not when redeployed during an investigation process? In the absence of explicit guidance on the HCPC website or instructions from HR/line management, a case was referred to Region, who spoke to UNISON's Professional Services Unit (PSU), who advised self-referral in the member's particular circumstances **was appropriate**.
- If you are unsure, follow best practice; ask the member to complete a caseform, complete a file on Caseweb, and ask a member of the Branch Management team to 'refer up' the case to Region for referral to the PSU who can advise.
- In other learning/awareness; members should not experience detriment as a result of an investigation process, including financial. In a case during this quarter, a member redeployed during an investigation stopped receiving unsocial payments; when we raised this on their behalf, the error was corrected. When supporting members, this kind of issue could happen due to a temporary change in their circumstances; it should however be easily corrected if picked up and raised through HR.
- I have raised concerns to Amy Beet and John Martin during our monthly touch-point meeting that the quality of Grievance Outcomes is becoming disheartening; concerns are not being 'upheld' or even 'part upheld' despite Chairs recognising where failing and mistakes have occurred. Evidence and points are not being consistently addressed, leaving key areas seemingly overlooked or not covered in final Stage 3 outcomes. Ahead of Staff Survey results being published, I proposed this could be an area warranting further exploration by HR.



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PRAG/JNCC

- Multiple requests made regarding the Case Review Policy, including a request to standardise the statement pro-forma templates staff complete, ensuring all statement taking adheres to 'Just and Learning' principles, (taking into consideration organizational factors which may have impacted an incident/a staff member's actions and behaviour) rather than Patient Safety incidents alone.
- Request made to SWAST to start re-publishing to all staff when new policies are released, and policies are updated. SWAST acknowledged this is a something they used to do which has fallen out of consistent practice; we need to see it returned, effectively, so that staff do not fall foul!
- At JNCC we discussed the prolonged incident report of faulty vehicles with seemingly no action until urgent escalation at Christmas during freezing temperatures. Jane Chandler (Director responsible for Risk) subsequently fed back to UNISON that an issue regarding feedback mechanisms from In Phase was discovered (i.e. providing feedback/updates back to reporting parties), which should now be fixed. The value of raising issues at JNCC when key Directors are present to pick up on issues has merit; this is our quarterly minuted meeting to raise our concerns.
- Ongoing policy work – Jacky and I are working with HR and the Head of Health and Safety on the 'No Smoking Policy'; we have collaboratively reviewed a first draft, revisions are being prepared for further review. The Trust is required to bring the organization in line with NHS Smoke Free requirements.

UNISON Women's Conference

I attended the UNISON Women's Conference as a branch delegate. At conference, I spoke to Motion 2, 'Tackling Digital Exclusion for Women in the Workplace'. A separate agenda item on Women's Conference will follow by attendees.



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Archiving

In line with UNISON's Data Protection requirements, I am currently working through a large box of paper casefiles to determine which cases are ready for destruction, and which require continued secure storage. Did you know, branches are required to retain member casefiles for 7 years, after which point they should be destroyed? A full records retention schedule which details what type of documents should be kept and for how long is available online [NEW-UNISON-Records-Retention-Schedule-updated-March-2019.pdf](#)

Goodbye!

This is my final AGM in the Branch, and ergo my final Branch Committee report, before leaving SWAST next month for my new trade union role! Good luck everyone!

In solidarity, Clare 😊