

UNISON Northern Region Lay Officers Nominations - 2017

Nicky Ramanandi
Linda Hobson
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Regional Convenor
Deputy Regional Convenor
Regional Treasurer

We are writing to ask for your Branch/Service Group/Self-Organised Group nomination as Convenor, Deputy Convenor and Treasurer for the Northern Region. As the Region continues to respond to the challenges facing our members and to be a respected and influential voice in the national union it is important that we have a strong lay leadership.

2016 has been referred to as 'The Year of Political Earthquake' and the aftershocks are certainly being felt with more yet to come. It was last February when David Cameron returned from Brussel's with the re-negotiated EU Membership deal that sparked the Referendum; a Referendum that led to more than our impending exit from Europe but also brought a new Tory Prime Minister with a more right wing Cabinet. November saw the conclusion of the Presidential Election in America and Donald Trump beating Hilary Clinton to be the next President. We've seen a Labour Party left to fight another leadership election and the Trade Union Bill is now an Act which threatens the very being of Trade Unions. This past 12 months have been challenging to say the least, however, there can be no doubt that there are more challenges ahead.

The Tory Government's austerity measures continue to have a disproportionate and devastating impact within our Region. We are seeing significant funding cuts across all services. EU Exit is extremely worrying for our Region as we wait to see Article 50 invoked and we have played a huge role within the Devolution debate, the implications of which have been felt right across the Region. It is important that UNISON Northern Region continues to have a strong position within the upcoming negotiations and that we use our political strength to deliver the best deal for our region and our members. We have very good relationships with our local Labour Councillor's, MP's, PCC's and MEP's and this will continue as we continue to fight for our region during through these unprecedented times.

Our Region has a reputation for being a Region that delivers and influences UNISON's policies nationally. We are a strong Region because we are a cohesive Region and below are just some examples of the work we have done together; that we would continue to build on. In Local Government the constant financial reductions has resulted in huge job and service loss. We are seeing a crisis in Adult Social Care that is impacting on our NHS services, our members that deliver it and the patients that rely on it. Sustainability and Transformation Plans are set to be the Governments flawed answer to the crisis they have created through the chronic underfunding of both Local Government and the NHS. The Region has the highest level of young people's unemployment and child poverty. The challenges we continue to face are significant. The priority for all of us is to ensure that we continue to engage with members in workplaces and communities and to challenge the policies of Austerity. The work we have been doing as a Region has put us in a good position to respond.

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Campaigning

As part of the Lay Leadership Team, working in partnership with Regional Council, Committee, Self-Organised Groups, Staff and Labour Link:

- Continued to produce and promote our agenda for public services and a fair society, particularly highlighting the increase in the use of payday loans, and food banks.
- Campaigning for the implementation of the Living Wage across the Region to help lift people out of poverty
- Promotion of Credit Unions.
- Maintaining and building the Public Service Alliance coalitions across the Region.
- Developing a strategy to engage with members around the continued public sector pay restraint, and making the case that this needs to be located as part of a wider campaign against attacks on terms and conditions.
- Working with branches, service groups, self-organised groups, and Labour Link to promote our alternative agenda, particularly to engage with local Councillors and MPs and our local MEP's.
- Campaigning against the enforcing of an Elected Mayor within our region via a Devolution deal that we are opposed to, whilst promoting an alternative Devolution Vision for our Region
- Campaigning with Police and Crime Commissioners to promote our manifesto
- Building alliances with Community Voluntary Sector and Private Sector
- Establishing regional working groups on key issues – public service reform, procurement and commissioning, personalisation; Clinical Commissioning Groups; health and social care.
- Campaigning with Show Racism the Red Card to challenge discrimination in our workplaces and communities.

Organising

- Putting organising at the heart of our activity – recruiting members and new activists, particularly young people and other under-represented sections of our membership.
- Increasing the participation of members in regional activities and campaigns.
- Increasing support for activists through training and mentoring.
- Identifying organising projects and securing resources to support lay activists in branches.

Bargaining

Promoting an agenda for;

- Trade Union and workforce engagement in procurement, efficiencies and cuts
- Challenging public sector pay restraint.
- Defending attacks on national terms and conditions
- Protecting Facility Time
- Workplace learning and development
- Equalities

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- Health and wellbeing – looking to focus on Mental Well-being of our activists as well as members in the workplace.

The Political climate at the moment is unprecedented, with the election of a majority Tory Government in 2015, the fallout from the Brexit vote and the American Presidential result our members need the reassurance that their union is on their side, showing strong leadership, unity and solidarity in these very troubled times. The 'coronation' of Theresa May as the new Tory Prime Minister, and the unveiling of her Cabinet has made it even clearer that we need to continue to build resilience within our union, our activists and our members. The current, prolonged economic crisis is being used to attack working people, and particularly some of the most vulnerable in our society. The constant attacks on public service workers are being driven by ideology rather than any economic arguments. The attempt to stigmatise the unemployed, and create divisions in our communities is disgraceful. This is why trade unions and UNISON in particular must be in the forefront, developing and promoting an agenda for fairness, jobs and quality public services and building and supporting broad based campaigns at local, regional and national level.

This ideology is not just confined to the UK, and is why we are seeing Austerity measures being implemented across Europe along with a rise in activity from Far Right organisations which need to be tackled locally, nationally and internationally. There are also important lessons to learn here in relation to the impact of privatisation of public services on a global scale, and also how to build resistance to these attacks. This is why our international work is so important. The Region has proudly supported and delivered projects in Colombia, Palestine, Burma, Cuba, and engaging with the refugee crisis, and working with the local Stop the War Coalition. It is important we continue to prioritise this work.

The Northern Region has a strong track record on delivery, and also working in a collective and inclusive way. We are immensely proud to represent this region and are committed to continuing this and indeed strengthening our activist base, and our responses to the Government's agenda. It is essential we continue to build our organisation across service group boundaries and share our resources locally.

We are asking for your support to continue to ensure we deliver for our members, communities and our activists.

Nominations open on the 23rd January 2017 to the 27th February 2017.

If you would like us to attend a meeting or want further information telephone;

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With thanks,

Nicky Ramanandi

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January 2017