

## An update from the National Dispute Committee: one year on from the USS Strike

As we approach the anniversary of the USS strike (Feb 22nd) it is worth remembering the enormous shift that has occurred from the position we found ourselves in 12 months ago. In February 2018, we were facing the imposition of a Defined Contribution pension scheme, which would have resulted in approximately £200,000 being cut from our pension. This is no-longer the case, and this shift would not have been possible without the USS dispute. Those 14 days of strike action helped us discover our strength and showed that when we stand together, things can be different.

Last Autumn's first report of the Joint Expert Panel (JEP) not only vindicated UCU's position that the scheme is not in trouble, but also made a series of recommendations which offer something close to a "no detriment" resolution to the dispute. These recommendations were unanimously backed by all members of the JEP, and have since received support from UCU and UUK representatives, along with the actuarial advisors of UCU and UUK (**First Actuarial** and **Aon**). We know that the process has been frustratingly slow at times, but this is an enormous shift from our position 12 months ago which would not have been possible without our unprecedented strike action last spring, and the continued pressure being put on USS by UCU members around the UK.

The most recent developments have not been straightforward, as USS have embarked on a 2018 valuation which - contra the support of all of the parties mentioned above - plans to accept only some of the JEP recommendations. USS are also proposing the inclusion of trigger contributions for the scheme (which could be an increase of up to 4%), a move currently being resisted by both UCU and UUK. However, we do know that UUK have asked USS to model the effects of 'benefit changes' to our scheme, which we have interpreted as benefit reductions. The position of UCU is 'no detriment' so if UUK do propose a reduction in benefits we will fight this, and may once again ask you to strike to save our pensions. For now, negotiations are ongoing, and there is a lot of activity behind the scenes. We believe it is time for UUK to use their influence to lobby USS to implement the JEP in full, and hone in on a solution to the dispute.

15 February 2019