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### 1. Branch meetings.

The branch committee continues to re-visit the guidance.

[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10879/Democratic-continuity-advice-for-branches-regionsdevolved-nations/pdf/ucu\\_covid19-democratic-continuity.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10879/Democratic-continuity-advice-for-branches-regionsdevolved-nations/pdf/ucu_covid19-democratic-continuity.pdf)

We are not considering scheduling any face-to-face branch meetings at present;

the committee has met on-line since in November 2020.

**The next branch meeting is planned for 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021.** The on-line meetings are open to branch members; and the zoom link will be sent to you by email.

We will continue to keep in regular contact with you by email.

You can contact officers and reps by the emails listed in this newsletter; the general branch email address is [ucu.swest@gmail.com](mailto:ucu.swest@gmail.com) and members are welcome to contact us anytime.

Tony Staunton chair SWRMB

### 2. Welcome to all members new to this branch since the previous newsletter.

We welcome several new members have joined us since the previous newsletter.

*Newsletter:* A termly newsletter for retired UCU members is sent to all branch members for whom we have email addresses.

*Email addresses:* UCU encourages us to use our home email when we retire.

For more information please contact:

[ucu.swest@gmail.com](mailto:ucu.swest@gmail.com)  
or contact the officers below:

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**SW NPC D/C** Liza Sentance [lizasentance@hotmail.com](mailto:lizasentance@hotmail.com)

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### 3. National Pensioners Convention

Some of you will already be individual members of the NPC.

<https://www.npcuk.org/join-us-and-get-involved>

In this branch we are affiliated with Western NPC and Devon and Cornwall branches.

The NPC website is <https://www.npcuk.org/>

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### Are you getting all the info?

If UCU HO has your email you should also receive regular updates on campaigns from UCU head office as well as occasional branch emails.

If this is not the case let us know and we can check with the H.O on your behalf.

The NPC's main objective is to promote



the welfare and interests of all pensioners and to secure dignity, respect and financial security in retirement. The NPC is the largest campaigning organisation for pensioners in the UK playing a key role in defending the welfare state and public services.

The recent NPC bulletin is <file:///C:/Users/User/AppData/Local/Temp/Campaign%20Bulletin%20165%20-%20Aug%20Sept%202021%20.pdf>

One of the items is: **The future is digital — but should we have more choice?**

The NPC webinar on 1st October will discuss how the drive to digital-only communications alienates older people who do not have, cannot use, or do not want to use the internet. Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director of Age UK, and Dr Jennifer Bute, founder of dementia charity Glorious Opportunity

will join the panel considering the current problems, and possible solutions to greater inclusion.

UCU SW RMB has delegates to the two branches of the NPC in our region.

Devon and Cornwall (DA) and

Gloucester, Avon and Somerset (GAS)

**SW NPC GAS** Ruth Amias,  
Barbara Segal.  
Mike Farmer

**SW NPC D/C** Liza Sentance

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#### **4. Introducing Alison Chapman at Exeter Office.**

I wanted to take an opportunity to say how much I am looking forward to working for the region and the amazing Exeter team. It needs to be said that I feel enormously blessed to be starting to work with Branches who have this regional team behind them and to be able to work with your teams closely to defend and challenge management to better the conditions of our members. We have a very strong sense of community, despite the miles that separate us. Some of you I have met and worked with regularly at Regional Committee and at Congress, some I have met at regional training events, many of which I rank not only as colleagues but also as friends. Some teams I have not yet met and I'm really looking forward to meeting you (albeit perhaps online to start with) to hear how things are from your members' perspective, how the activists see the challenges ahead and what key work you want to achieve this next year. For people new to me, here's a little of my background. I started life as a trainee youth worker and a learning support assistant for students with SEN/Autistic Spectrum Disorder and other physical and

learning needs. I have worked in community learning with residents in the Foyer Projects in Plymouth, while cutting my teeth in the engineering department as learning support (surrounded by male Daily Mail readers who raised eyebrows at my over-sized overall and rather small safety boots). I started my teacher training and worked across levels 1-3, including entry-level students, doing 1-2-1 with students with challenging behaviour in A-Level and vocational learning. I was also landed with delivering Key Skills in English, maths and IT which morphed into Functional Skills as the years went by. I pulled my hair out trying to get sports, tourism and public services students to read extended materials while spending hours assessing- unpaid- in thankless overtime. I have been a full-time FE worker for 20 years and know the changes we've seen and the challenges we've faced and will continue to do, in the COVID world we've adjusted to. Sitting on the NEC for 4 years has given me an insight into the struggles of the HE sector too, which, in many respects, follows the race to the bottom that the FE sector has, sadly, led on for 10 or so years. I started in the union as a NATFHE member and quickly learned that I could either sit around moaning about stuff or roll my sleeves up and help the ailing Branch reps. I have been a caseworker and Branch negotiator for years, Equality rep and have done my fair share of recruitment door knocks, picket lines and campaigns. I took over the role of Branch Chair after a double retirement in our Committee and remember that feeling of how daunting it can be to be the one who faces management. As we all know, we're covered when some of our best colleagues are UCU trained and have our backs. Our Branch, like many, has felt like

a ship buffeted by waves and war in equal measure and I have learned quickly to use our support networks, our training and key 'build the branch' stuff so you can have a team of reps and you don't have to do it alone. But above all this, having a steady team at region is the backup some of us need to make a stand and challenge to win. I'm sure I'm not alone in saying we will miss Philippa, her energy, expertise and comradeship. I am very lucky to start working in such a brilliant region. See you all soon I hope.

[AlisonChapman SW Region](#)

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## **5. Inside UK Universities: Staff mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus pandemic.**

A few months ago I contacted a number of UCU branches about our research that explored UK university staff wellbeing during the coronavirus pandemic. Many UCU branches were willing to circulate this and as a result we received responses from over 1,000 university staff. So thank you for all your help and support with this research. I really appreciate it.

I am also sending the findings from this research as it may be of interest to you and your branch members. Below is a short summary with a link to the full report. Feel free to disseminate this amongst the members of your UCU branch, or to anybody else you think may be interested in these findings. We have also disseminated this report on twitter (@SESWellbeing\_HE).

Please note that the findings we report are not peer reviewed but will inform a future peer-reviewed publication.

[Isla Dougall UCU Durham.](#)

This report documents the mental health and wellbeing of university staff during

the coronavirus pandemic, using survey data collected online in March 2021 from 1,182 staff employed across 92 UK universities. Overall, the survey data suggest that university staff are grappling with high levels of poor mental health and wellbeing:

- One in two university staff reported experiencing chronic emotional exhaustion (55%), worry (53%), and stress (51%) during the academic year 2020/21.
- Half of the staff surveyed (47%) described their mental health as poor.
- Over a third of staff members reported low life satisfaction (36%).
- More than a quarter of staff reported feeling as if the things they did in their lives were not worthwhile (27%).
- One in two staff members experienced high levels of anxiety (50%) – 1.5 times higher than the national average (32%).
- One in three university staff reported low levels of happiness (33%) compared with a national average<sup>1</sup> of one in seven (14%). In this report, we explore factors that may alleviate the burden of poor mental health and wellbeing amongst HE staff.

Factors that fall more within the remit of institutions include social inclusion and the alignment between skills and task demands. Factors that fall more within the remit of government and policy makers include autonomy and the value that is placed on universities and their staff. In publishing this report, we hope institutional leaders and policy makers will recognise the urgent need to improve staff mental health and wellbeing. As we approach another academic year impacted by Covid-19 and universities in England brace themselves for funding cuts in the next spending review, action is needed to prevent a further deterioration in staff mental health and wellbeing.



To view the full report, click here:  
<https://psyarxiv.com/23axu/>  
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## 6. FE news.

I wanted to let you know that members at **Bristol, Plymouth, Weymouth and Swindon** branches have smashed through the anti-union threshold legislation and registered an overwhelming vote in favour of strike action in the new term, unless their employers make a satisfactory pay offer for 2020/2021 .

I am sure you would want to join the regional office team in congratulating these branches and their officers on this stunning outcome. For the 2021/2022 pay round **all FE branches** will be asked to engage in a campaign for better pay and reduced workloads and this is a strong indication that members in FE have had enough .... the fight is on !!

And from Head Office: Members of UCU in [15 further education colleges in England have voted for strike action](#) in their ongoing row over pay. Staff at three colleges that are part of Capital City College Group, London, have also voted to strike over working conditions and compulsory redundancies.

An overwhelming 89% of members who voted backed strike action, on an average turnout of over 62%. Well done on some great GTVO activity to branches at Carshalton College, City College Plymouth, City of Bristol College, City of Liverpool College, Croydon College, Kingston College, Lambeth College, Merton College, New College Swindon, Sheffield College, Wandsworth & Tooting College and Weymouth College.

The employers are now on notice that action could begin in September if the disputes aren't resolved.

In solidarity

Nick, Catriona, Dave, Philippa, Morin, Alison  
and Becca

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## 7. Landmark agreement guarantees pay rise and job security for over 4,000 Open University staff.

UCU welcomed a transitional agreement reached with the Open University (OU) to ensure improved pay and job security as the university moves more than 4,000 associate lecturers onto new contracts.

After originally agreeing new contractual terms for associate lecturers in 2018 for implementation in autumn 2021, in March OU backtracked and announced a delay.

Following extensive negotiations, UCU and the university have now signed a legally binding agreement which came into force on Tuesday 29 June. This ensures the OU will implement the new permanent contract in August 2022 and puts measures in place so that associate lecturers don't lose out from the contract delay.

OU UCU branch president Caitlin Adams

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## 8. UCU Calendar of meetings 2021 - 2022.

[http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/html/ucu1095.html?utm\\_source=Lyris&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=reps&utm\\_term=bou&utm\\_content=UCU+branch+officers%27+update:+25+June+2021](http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/html/ucu1095.html?utm_source=Lyris&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=reps&utm_term=bou&utm_content=UCU+branch+officers%27+update:+25+June+2021)

**Annual meeting of retired members' branches: Wednesday 24 November 2021**

Deadline for submission of motions:

Wednesday 3 November 2021

Deadline for registration: Wednesday 10  
November 2021

**Annual equality groups conference** (Black members, Disabled members, LGBT+ members, Migrant members, Women members), including joint session and individual conferences: **Thursday 2**

**December – Saturday 4 December 2021**

Deadline for registration of delegates: *to be confirmed*

Deadline for submission of motions:

Thursday 11 November 2021

Deadline for submission of committee nominations: Thursday 18 November 2021

[UCU Circular 1095](#)

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## 9. The Banner Theatre.

This is the foremost political theatre company in Britain. Banner Theatre is a socialist theatre company based in Birmingham. Formed in 1973, from a disparate collection of folk singers, drama teachers, office workers, broadcasters, technicians and car factory workers, Banner is one of the few companies from the radical community theatre movement of the 1960s-1970s still creating and performing work in partnership with Britain's Trade Union movement and working class and disenfranchised communities – those A. Sivanandan calls 'communities of resistance'.



Banner theatre offers stirring insights and sharp commentaries on salient issues of our times. Banner Theatre creates powerful, innovative, issue-based multimedia theatre productions, which tour to community and trade union audiences, predominantly in non-theatre/non-arts venues, typically reaching over 10,000 people annually.

They have a successful track record of developing collaborative documentary theatre, combining video interviews and original live music and song with theatre, film and animation, in a form we call the 'video-ballad', which stages the real-life experiences of disadvantaged groups and communities in struggle.

What makes the company unique is, first and foremost, its use of 'actuality' – ordinary people's words captured by camera, that constitute the source material of all their shows.

Some of Banner's founder members came from Centre 42, a project initiated by Charles Parker and Arnold Wesker in the early 1960s, which aimed to interest trade unionists in radical culture. Others were recruited from the Birmingham Folk Centre and the Grey Cock Folk Club. Charles Parker, an influential founder member of the company, was a left-wing broadcaster, renowned for producing, along with Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, a powerful and innovative series

of radio programmes known as The Radio Ballads (1957-1964).

Banner theatre put on a splendid May Day Celebration in 2021; I've made a note for myself for 2022.

<https://bannertheatre.co.uk/>

With permission from Banner Theatre.

## 10. Celebrating Greenham.

The legendary Greenham Women's Peace Camp has a big anniversary in 2021 – 40 years since the first women marched from Wales to set up a peace camp outside RAF Greenham Common.



The anniversary celebrations are a momentous re-creation of this march, leaving Cardiff on Thursday August 26th and arriving at Greenham on Friday September 3rd for a weekend of festivities!

On Saturday 28th August the walkers arrived in Bristol and some of us were there to meet them at the pre-arranged stopping places. This was at Flo-Jo Fabrics, whose own banner then joined the march to Bristol Central.



And from the Archives...

## A Daytrip to Greenham

Joanne Payton

I don't remember how old I was when I got on a bus with my mum to Greenham, but I was young enough that my mum thought it would be cute to dress me as a little Welsh girl, in shawl and hat, and I was young enough not to protest. My memories are vague: the excitement of seeing the camp through the bus window, with the ragged yet somehow joyful banners; the Greenham women cheering the buses as they unloaded; a crumpled sheet of protest songs which I taught all my friends in the playground for months



afterwards. *'Oh we're not not having Trident and we're not not having Cruise....'* to the tune of 'Oh Susanna'.

Most clearly, I remember the end of the day: darkness and the bitter-cold sinking into my small bones. The buses endlessly circling us, under orders from the police, I was told. Watching the bus that could take me home to my bed pass us by again and again. Trying not to cry so as to not upset my mum, bring the carnival spirit of the day to a close and make my cheeks any colder than they already were. Becoming numbed and muted with cold. Standing close to a wood-fire built by the adults to keep the children from freezing, and watching the orange sparks sputter and drift up and up into the black. Being bundled with the other children into a police minibus after they had ordered the fire extinguished: still cold, but at least out of the wind, they said. We sat quietly in our seats; intimidated by the police, exhausted. I was carried to the bus, finally, under a sky greying with dawn.

My mother was very active against all things nuclear, but she was an anti-feminist. I regret this, not just because I think all women should be feminists, but because feminism explained so much about her frustrations, her anxieties, and the suffering she experienced as a working class woman in South Wales. For her, Greenham was about Trident, about the acetate map overlay she had, which you could place on an OS map and calculate epicentres and fall-out and see how quickly, how horribly, you would die; about sirens and bunkers and the end of the world. It was only later, as a teenager neck-deep in second-wave feminism, that I discovered the importance of Greenham Common in the UK's feminist history and

remembered that briefly, just for a daytrip – hey – I was there!

<https://greenhamwomeneverywhere.co.uk/>  
Creative Commons.

Greenham Women Everywhere is a partnership project between Scary Little Girls Association and The Heroine Collective. Funded by Heritage Lottery South West. Supported by **The University of The West of England** in Bristol, Cornwall Council, **Falmouth University**, **The Women's Library at The London School of Economics**, The East End Women's Museum, **Goldsmiths University of London**, The Hypatia Trust, The Feminist Library, Kresen Kernow, the UK Parliament Vote 100 Project and Dreadnought South West.

Jo Corke SW RMB

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## 11. Teachers' Pensions | For Members

**My Pension Online** is the Teachers' Pension online portal designed to help you manage your pension more efficiently.

<https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/members/faqs/my-pension-online/my-pension-online.aspx>

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## 12. Editor's Note.

Contributions to the newsletter are welcome.

Jo Corke SW RMB

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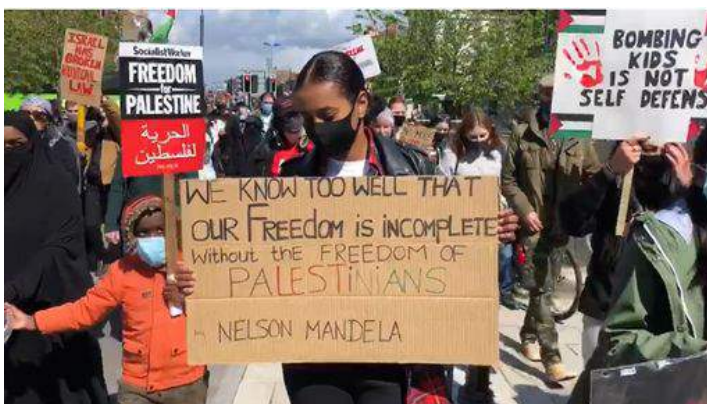


# The Nina Franklin Fund - supporting education in Palestine

UCU has given its support to Palestinian people for many years. In 2018 UCU president Doug Chalmers joined a delegation of education unions on a visit to Palestine. [His report](#) describes in detail some of the everyday problems faced by Palestinians as Israel continues to drive deeper into their land.

For over a century now, Palestinians have faced expulsion and dispossession in their homelands. The continued spread of illegal settlements and the destruction of Palestinian homes and property in the West Bank face resistance, but place huge pressure on the lives of Palestinians, and in particular children.

Despite a drive to erase Palestine from the map and its people from history, the voices of Palestinians are being heard more loudly than ever. When the Israeli military bombed Gaza in May - hundreds were killed and injured - there were [huge protests on the streets of Bristol](#) and other major cities across the world.



Clockwise from top left: the shrinking map of Palestine; drawing made at a Nina Franklin summer camp; recent Bristol protest against the bombing of Gaza; Nina Franklin

The delegation that Doug Chalmers joined was the latest in a series of trade union delegations to Palestine in recent years. These are now bearing fruit as unions play a full part in promoting Palestinian rights and building solidarity networks. Many of our members will know of Nina Franklin, former secretary of the Bristol NEU (formerly NUT and ATL). During her time as NUT President IN 2012 Nina prioritised the promotion of Palestinian rights within the NUT and the TUC.

Following Nina's untimely death in August 2020, members of her family, friends and colleagues from the NEU launched a fund in Nina's name to raise support for the work of the [Hebron International Resource Network \(HIRN\)](#). HIRN works to keep Palestinians on their lands and in their communities. HIRN does this in collaboration with neighbourhoods and families in the following ways:

- Scholarships for Palestinians seeking higher education.
- Support for water and electricity access.
- Building schools and communities so children don't have to cross checkpoints to attend.
- Support for building and renovation projects to keep families on their lands.
- Aiding communities to farm on their land, so they can be self-sufficient and have goods to sell.

So far the fund has raised almost £20,000 to pay for school building works, such as the shade for a kindergarten in Hebron (picture below), and for summer camps. At our meeting in June, several members asked for the branch to support and publicise [The Nina Franklin Fund](#). You can support the Nina Franklin Fund by

- Making a direct donation - all monies are directed through the Amos Trust
- Supporting current Bristol NEU secretary Tom Bolton's 10K run in September to raise money for the fund
- Joining our Walk for Palestine in late October - a through Stoke Park, Eastville Park, Bristol (pics from last year's walk below) with a meal and good company at the finish. For details contact [hedleybashforth@gmail.com](mailto:hedleybashforth@gmail.com)

