

Update on the picket line at Brunel – Pertinent words by our UNISON Steward Mike Griffiths on work-related matters!

In 2023, our RCOT Co-opted BAOT UNISON Steward Mike Griffiths had an extremely busy year as the Unison representative on the Committee. He is an asset to our committee and has a wealth of knowledge.

Mike participates in all work-related matters regarding pay, cost of living, strikes and campaigning. Additionally, has become aware on Government's anti-trade union laws, in Europe and engaged in challenging issues in the workplace, supporting occupational therapist around the rise in islamophobia and antisemitism during the attack on Gaza.

His key message is: "...To have more occupational therapy activists...".

We need occupational therapists at all levels to get involved with our campaigning, around pay, equalities, health and safety or other workplace issues.

Message from Mike

I am the Unison representative on the Committee. This is a co-opted post, nominated from the regional occupational therapy shop stewards' forum.

It has been a busy year for us, with lots going on regarding pay campaigns, strike action and campaigning. The pay campaign was ultimately disappointing, with patchy and uncoordinated strike action, and a deal that failed to address the years of below-inflation pay rises, let alone the rising cost of living.

We learned some hard lessons about the government's anti-trade union laws, which are some of the toughest in Europe. Only four of the NHS Trusts in London met the criteria for the strike ballot. We learned that we need to organise better in all the other Trusts and the key to this is to have more occupational therapy activists. We need a strong grassroots network to press for action and to hold union officials to account. There were lots of other groups of workers on strike.

We organised solidarity with occupational therapy lecturers in the UCU union, supporting them on their picket line at Brunel University. We are also taking up issues in workplaces where staff have been let down by the employer over issues around the rise in islamophobia and antisemitism during the attack on Gaza.

London occupational therapy workplace activists attended a training seminar in Coventry where we had some really useful sessions to boost our skills in organising and representing our colleagues.

There is lots more to do. We need to gear up for next year's pay round. We need to tackle issues around equity and diversity in all of our workplaces. We need to tackle overbearing management and the difficulties caused by understaffing and recruitment problems, which will only get worse with the government's new earnings threshold, which will thwart efforts at international recruitment. In order to do all these things, we need activists in workplaces.

We need occupational therapists at all levels to get involved with our campaigning, around pay, equalities, health and safety or other workplace issues. Please get in touch and I'll be happy to tell you what the options are.