

In this Newsletter

1. Nottingham College – a fight for the future of FE
2. Angie Mindel “Palestine – Problems and Solutions
3. Rising State Pension Age
4. An update on the USS dispute
5. Midlands TUC Pensioners Network
6. Primary Care Networks in the NHS
7. Some Thoughts on the Climate Crisis
8. UCU Retired Members Branch



More information and news can be obtained from these websites. We suggest you have a browse.

UCU National Website:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk>

AgeUK: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/>

68 is too late: www.68istoolate.org.uk

National Pensioners Convention (NPC):
<http://npcuk.org>

Your branch has its own website at
<http://www.ucu-em-rmb.org.uk>

Follow your Branch on Twitter:
@ucu-em-rmb

Branch meeting and AGM Tuesday Oct 15th 2019

11.00 – 13.00
(Speaker at 12.00)

Speaker: Chris Mason
UCU Pensions Official

“The Future for our Pensions”.

John Storer House,
Ward's End, Loughborough, LE11 3HA



Stop Press: Nottingham College – a fight for the future of FE



Friday 4th Oct.

Pickets are still out in force on Day 11 after another massive branch meeting this week rejected further concessions from management. In another impressive demonstration of solidarity, the branch voted heavily in favour of continuing, rather than temporarily suspending their action after an outline of a potential deal was put to them. Branch also voted to issue notice of further strike days after the forthcoming half term in case a negotiated settlement cannot be reached by then.

Whilst management are now offering more significant concessions and protections from their original imposed contract, branch members remain sceptical of any promises from a management team in which they have lost all trust. The branch is holding out for a more detailed written set of proposals on key issues such as workloads and pay scales as well as a resolution of the issue of those members who refused to sign the new contract and were dismissed. Negotiators are working hard in the background, knowing that they have a strong mandate.

Strikes are therefore scheduled to continue with a five day programme scheduled for next week (beginning 7th October), with a branch meeting scheduled for Wednesday 9th October in anticipation of a potential new offer.

Paul_Wilkinson.

1. Nottingham College – a fight for the future of FE

“This offer is more than good enough for you” growled Nottingham College CEO John van der Laarschott as he swooped past UCU’s picket lines last Friday (20th Sept).

That was clearly not the view of angry strikers who, the day before, had unanimously rejected

revised contract proposals from management at a packed 130-strong emergency branch meeting. That a revised offer had been made at all is a testament to the solidarity being shown by UCU members in what has become a bitter and crucial dispute. It came as members embarked on their second week of a planned 15 days of escalating strike action against the imposition of new contracts announced just before summer, and the issuing of 90-day dismissal notices to any refusing to sign.

This new contract:

- removes negotiated pay scales, leaving some staff £1300 worse off
- removes automatic incremental progression
- slashes sick pay and holidays
- removes basic workload protections such as maximum weekly teaching hours
- removes key policies from contractual status

Most members have now signed the new contract in an act of tactical self-preservation but indicated that they have done so under duress. **Management then compounded that duress by informing staff that they would not accept signatures signed under duress! This simply precipitated a campaign of letter-writing to Board members so that they were left in no doubt. At the same time they have determined to maintain their dispute, which had the backing of 96% of the turnout in last June’s ballot.**



RMB members on the picket line

Management’s partial climb-down on Thursday proposed some additional pay and sick pay protections for existing staff and offered woolly promises to look at workload. Members however were clear that this went nowhere near far enough to meet the union’s demands of ‘no overall detriment’. A common theme expressed in the branch meeting was that van der Laarschott and the Board simply can not be trusted, given the

intimidation and bullying that has characterised industrial relations since he was appointed. Members voted, with just two abstentions, to continue their action rather than accept the offer as even the basis for negotiation.

The importance of this dispute has not been lost on UCU Head Office. Head of FE, Andrew Harden, along with Regional officer Julie Cooper, have been leading the negotiations and striking staff are being sustained by strike pay. Picket lines and meetings have been visited by new UCU General Secretary Jo Grady and union President Douglas Chalmers, who clearly understand the high stakes here

As Harden and Grady have repeatedly pointed out, what is happening at Nottingham College is way out of kilter with agreements being made up and down the country with UCU in the FE Fights Back campaign. It is also unnecessary, given recent announcements of further monies for the sector, an estimated £1.3m of which will go to the college. The union simply cannot allow any college to tear up collective bargaining procedures and bully a professional body of staff onto non-negotiated terms for fear of feeding the bloodlust of other college principals.

Strikers have been buoyed on the picket lines by the high level of involvement of their own members as well as the frequent visits from local trade unionists, members of the public, students, Labour MPs and councillors. Messages of support have come from far and wide, including the TUC Congress. And like last year's USS dispute many previously inactive union members are quickly understanding the benefits of collective action and solidarity and the mood is strengthening rather than wavering. As one member put it: 'We are learning the lesson of quiet complacency.' Staff are naturally extremely concerned about the impact on students as reports reveal a college in chaos at the start of the academic year. Students are being sent home with no notice, some groups have been doubled-up to over 40, and there are claims that some staff have been given timetables with up to 37.5 weekly teaching hours. However, members also understand where the blame lies here. We can at least thank van der Laarschott for adding over 100 new members to the branch since the dispute started,

What this dispute brings into sharp focus is the wider political issue of how FE should be funded and controlled. Despite strong representations from local councillors who have serious concerns that the college is not meeting the demands and needs of the community (and who also have a £20m loan interest in the college) van der

Laarschott remains arrogantly aloof. What should be a precious local resource has been turned into a semi-privatised fiefdom run by a largely unaccountable Board. It says something as well that van der Laarschott has found it necessary to appoint a Principal to run curriculum matters. In other words, the educational modelling of the college has become secondary to its business management. As we approach a likely general election we must make sure that the need for democratically accountable and properly funded colleges is a central policy issue. Cinderella is long overdue for her visit to the ball. This dispute is more than a *cause-celebre*, it is about the future of FE.



RMB members on the picket line

RMB members have been attending picket lines and rallies, and using whatever avenues they have to get support from local trades unions and Labour Party branches. Please do what you can.

Strikes are scheduled to continue on:
Oct 7/8/9/10/11

Messages can be sent to UCUNottingham via Facebook and Twitter or direct to Rob Peutrell (Branch Sec) and Kitty Howarth (Chair). Further news and details can be found on UCU website.

[Paul Wilkinson.](#)

2. Angie Mindel - "Palestine - Problems and Solutions"

Angie began by explaining that she had been raised in a Jewish family in an orthodox Jewish community and is now an active member of Jewish Voice for Labour and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. This is because, like many Jews, she wants to say that the policies of the Israeli government are not being carried out in her name.

The situation in Palestine is a huge human rights disaster. The Israelis are breaking UN resolutions and committing war crimes so why is the world not speaking out? President Trump is a problem e.g. recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moving the US embassy there, reducing funding of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and his recognition of the settlement of the Golan Heights. (Netanyahu is actually planning to name part of the Golan after Trump to thank him.) 700 families have been evicted from their homes in East Jerusalem and there are plans to evict a further 500 families.

There are plans to extend the illegal settlements. There is also violence against the Palestinians, e.g. one was recently rammed by a car, children died in a house fire because the fire engines were stopped at roadblocks. Gaza has been described as the biggest open air prison as it is under siege – there are many restrictions on what goods are allowed in and on people wishing to leave. Egypt complies with this regime at their border crossing with Gaza. The Israelis often boast about the accuracy of their snipers – they have shot medics, journalists, women and children amongst others. They use illegal exploding bullets which shatter bones as a result of which Gaza has the highest number of amputees in the world. In the recent peaceful protests, 271 Palestinians have been killed and over 29,000 injured.

Defence for Children International has found that Israel is the only country to prosecute children in military courts. This is usually for stone-throwing and the conviction rate is around 97-99%. 205 Palestinian minors are in prisons across the West Bank. Children are often taken from their homes during the night and removed to Israel (taking them to another jurisdiction is a war crime) and there they are often required to sign statements written in Hebrew which they cannot read. There are also attacks on schools – recently a school in Hebron was attacked with tear gas without provocation.

Drinkable water is very scarce in Gaza. The Palestinians have water butts on their rooftops but Angie found, when she visited with 8 others last October, that there wasn't enough water there for a whole week. If they want bottled water, they have to buy Israeli bottled water. Angie visited a village which was once dependent upon agriculture but then a settlement diverted the spring which was their entire water supply and there is now no agriculture there. The Oslo agreement included a clause which forbids Palestinians from drilling into the ground (to stop tunnelling) which means they cannot drill a well when they need one.

Travel is very problematic. After the 1967 war, the Israelis carried out a census and anyone who was not in Jerusalem at that time lost their residence rights. Residents of Jerusalem have a blue id card and the rest of the West Bank a green one. If someone leaves Jerusalem for 6 months, they lose their rights. One effect of this is that if children go elsewhere to live and work, they lose their Jerusalem id so cannot ever again visit their family in Jerusalem. During any Jewish holiday, travel is severely restricted for Christians and Muslims. Restrictions on travel are also used as a punishment; e.g. a pastor in Bethlehem lost his Jerusalem pass and his Filipino wife was given only a tourist visa because they had shown support for the BDS campaign. If Palestinians wish to build or extend their home, they have to have a permit and these are hardly ever issued so they have no choice but to build without one but they then risk demolition. Demolition of homes is also used as punishment if one member of a family is in trouble with the Israelis. Remarkably, the Palestinian victims are then required to pay all the associated costs so some have even demolished their own homes because that is cheaper. Last October there were plans to demolish a whole village but it was postponed after international criticism. There is still a danger that it will happen, whole villages are demolished to make way for Israeli settlements and also for roads.

Now the Israeli government has passed the Nation State Law which enshrines in law that the 20% of Israeli citizens who are Palestinian are second class citizens. This has many effects, e.g. Arabic is no longer an official language so it is not on road signs, Israelis can state that they do not want Arabs to live in their area, Israelis and Arabs cannot marry. It is clearly a racist law. In the recent elections, the government put cameras in polling stations to intimidate Arabs into not voting.

Hebron is the largest city in the West Bank and the situation there now is getting as bad as that in Gaza. The settlers there are the most militant in taking over land and building segregated roads – some roads Palestinians aren't even allowed to walk down. In 1994 there was a massacre by a settler at the Ibrahimi Mosque which killed 29 people and injured 150. 50 Palestinians were killed in total over the next few days. The response of the Israeli government was to divide the mosque so that half of it became a synagogue and close off the main street, Al-Shuhada Street to Palestinians. Some Palestinian homes on that street can now only be entered through a back window. When Angie's party went olive picking at the back of this street, they were watched all day by armed

soldiers. There is a large illegal settlement at the top of the hill so that settlers regularly walk through Palestinian land accompanied by armed security guards. Many of the Israelis themselves also carry guns. There are armed posts all around Hebron and several Palestinian homes have been taken over. Once settlers move into a house, it is classed as 'disputed' and the Palestinians cannot move back in.

Angie showed us a map of the area (the supposedly empty land) as it was at the time of the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948 showing the percentage of Jews and Arabs in the various areas. Jaffa was the only area with a Jewish majority, thus showing that Israel was not established according to who was in the majority.

What are the Solutions?

Angie told us that when you speak to most Palestinians about what they want, they don't speak about the 'two-state solution', they just want the occupation to end. The Israeli plan is to link the settlements (some of which are now very big) with Israeli-only roads – roads which go through Palestinian areas. Thus, the time has passed for the two-state solution as there is no longer a viable Palestinian state. Hundreds of thousands of Israeli settlers are living in the West Bank. There is now effectively a single state but it is controlled by the Israelis.

There is some hope for the future, for example, young US Jews are now saying no to the 'birth right tours' of Israel. However, there is still the problem of the US vetoing every UN resolution.

Individually, we can do our bit:

- Boycott Israeli products
- Encourage local councils and Union pension funds to divest from Israeli businesses, particularly those in illegal settlements
- Lobby for sanctions on Israel until it ends the occupation, e.g. it should not be part of FIFA when it does not allow Palestinians to play international football
- Support the academic boycott of individuals who are *state sponsored*
- Maintain free speech by not conflating anti-semitism with anti-Zionism and resist the adoption of the IHRA definition
- Complain when propaganda is presented as fact (e.g. by media)
- Donate to Medical Aid for Palestinians (www.map.org.uk), HIRN (Hebron International Resource Network – who hosted Angie in Hebron) via the Amos Trust

(<https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/7827#/DonationDetails>) and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (www.palestinecampaign.org) which is currently involved in a court case on the issue of free speech

- Join the PSC

Members were also recommended to watch The Lobby, a 4 part series on YouTube.

Helen Chester

3. Rising State Pension Age

Iain Duncan Smith's amusingly named Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) is calling for a rapid increase in the State Pension Age (SPA) to 70 by 2028 and then to 75 a few years later. Currently the SPA is transitioning between 65 and 66; it will reach 66 by 6 October 2020 and then go on to increase to 67 by 2028. Increasing SPA is very popular with this Government and its predecessor Coalition. One of the arguments used by the think tank, chaired by Iain Duncan Smith MP, former secretary of state for Work and Pensions, was that the state pension bill has increased from £17bn in 1985/86 to £92bn in 2016/17, representing an increase from 3.9 to 4.6 per cent of GDP. What this daunting statistic ignores is that Britain has an appallingly low State Pension.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has calculated that upon retiring the average British worker will receive a state pension and related benefits worth 29% of what they had previously been earning. This is the lowest rate for any OECD country, where the average is 63%, and countries such as Italy and the Netherlands workers enjoy rates as high as 80%. The OECD report highlights the high levels of poverty of older people in the UK. Among those aged 75 and over, 18.5% have income levels below the poverty line, most of whom are women. The OECD sees the UK's low level of state pension as the main cause of this poverty.

The already existing increases in SPA are saving the government an estimated £18.5m a week. There were 13 million recipients of the State Pension in February 2019, 120,000 less than a year earlier, according to government figures. The CSJ acceleration of SPA rise would save even more. In an amazing flight of fantasy, the CSJ believes that these rises would get more people aged 55 to 64 into work, would slash the costs of out-of-work benefits but also help boost GDP by around 9%, equating to £182bn. Presumably the whip of extended poverty until 70 or 75 would propel

those who at present cannot find work into a job. Three-quarters of Britain's elderly will rely entirely on their state payments by 2036. This pleasing day dream is countered by life expectancy in the UK being currently 82 for women and 79 for men and is now decreasing under the impact of austerity measures. But more to the point healthy life expectancy (HLE) is far less. In England, healthy life expectancy at birth is 63.3 years for males and 63.9 for females. Crucially a social gradient exists whereby the poorer members of society – exactly those who are most dependent on the State Pension - have a dramatically smaller HLE. The gap in HLE between rich and poor areas is a staggering 21.5 years. Jan Shortt of the National Pensioners Convention commented: "The longer you work the more ill you become and the less likely you are to even reach retirement age." It would be pleasing to imagine that all this is just a nightmare and no Government would be suicidal enough to implement the CSJ proposals. Back in 2009 the CSJ proposed a huge welfare reform; it was to be called Universal Credit. We are still living through that nightmare.

Julian Atkinson

4. An update on the USS dispute

The likelihood of another round of strikes has increased after university managements backed measures that will increase costs for staff in the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). At a meeting of the USS Joint Negotiating Committee, management proposals, that will see members pay 9.6% of their salary into their USS pension, compared to 8.8% at present, with further increases planned from 2021, were backed by the chair Sir Andrew Cubie. Jo Grady, our new General Secretary, is touring higher education institutions across the UK this autumn, calling on members to vote **YES** in both the USS pension ballot and the higher education pay and equality ballot. UCU tabled its own proposals to the JNC setting out why universities should meet any additional costs. The union previously wrote to universities in June and warned that if they did not agree to limit members' contributions to 8%, or meet the cost of any additional contributions, then they faced the risk of a strike action ballot.

UCU is now balloting its members at 69 institutions for strike action. The ballot opened on 9th September and will close on 30th October. The union says USS members have been frustrated by a lack of progress in the dispute that saw universities brought to standstill last year by unprecedented levels of strike action. The strikes in early 2018

secured an independent Joint Expert Panel (JEP) which analysed the scheme and how it operated. At the heart of the current impasse is management's refusal to rule out additional costs for scheme members, or to cover any rise in contributions. Under the management plans, total contributions will be 30.7% and the split will be 21.1% for employers and 9.6% for employees. If a contribution rate arising from the next valuation in 2020 cannot be agreed in time then a default contribution rate of 34.7% would come into effect in October 2021 with members paying 11% and employers 23.7%.

Prior to the ballot opening, Jo Grady said: 'Universities have passed up an opportunity to bring us back from the brink of another round of strikes. We are incredibly disappointed they have pushed to burden members with unnecessary and unfair extra costs. These increases have serious consequences and may force some members to leave USS, jeopardising not only individual retirement plans but the future of the scheme as a whole.'

Our ballot opens next month and unless universities are prepared to pick up the increased costs for USS members they will face another round of strikes over pensions. The last round of strikes secured the Joint Expert Panel, but universities failed to press USS to implement the JEP's recommendations in full and USS members should not have to pay for their failings.'

Research published subsequently shows that staff face being £240,000 worse off. According to new modelling by First Actuarial, because of the changes to USS, a typical member will pay around £40,000 more in to their pension, but receive almost £200,000 less in retirement, leaving them in all £240,000 worse off, compared to a member who also joined in 2011 on the same conditions, but has not been affected by any of the changes brought in since then.

The analysis looks at how recent changes to the scheme have affected members' costs and retirement package, including the increase in contribution levels to 9.6% from October 2019, the closure of the final salary element and a restriction on defined benefits. While the analysis shows that those that earn more will lose more, the impact of increased costs on those on lower wages must not be discounted and warned some members may leave the scheme.

Thank you to the national UCU website for providing most of the above information.

Rob Kirkwood

5. Midlands TUC Pensioners Network



News from the Recent Meeting on 18.9.2019

It is always interesting to attend these meetings, especially nowadays, and to hear views from a range of very experienced (retired) Trade Unionists.

Speaker Louise Regan, a national officer from NEU (National Education Union) talked about the recent NEU congress where the focus was on workers' rights/collective bargaining. As she explained, many 'workers' in schools are currently taking action about pay and conditions and resistance is growing as is reported in some of the press at the moment. For example: "A quarter of teachers in England work 60 hours a week" The Guardian 18.9.2019.

She also mentioned the need to support 'WASPI' women, the importance of Climate Change which is becoming a very big issue and concern about rising poverty leading to more and more foodbanks opening, which is appalling in one of the richest nations in the world. The current situation in schools due to funding cuts, she explained, is getting worse. Some discussion arose regarding aspects such as expensive school uniform and equipment and school trips being beyond the reach of the least wealthy families and so should be abolished!

But Louise left us with the positive thought that a general election is a great opportunity for change and that something must happen.

Issues raised within the TUC pensioners group included ongoing matters of concern and focus for

future action which were discussed. These included: pensions and access to Pension Credit, raising of the State Pension age, TV Licences, transport and Bus Passes, the NHS and Social Care, the Climate Strike action, and the dangers of the current political situation.

The next meeting due to take place on November 13th may be postponed or cancelled in relation to a possible election taking place, and the availability of the speaker. The suggested theme for the next meeting is "Tackling the Far Right"

Rowena Dawson

6. Primary Care Networks in the NHS

A key part of the NHS long-term plan, primary care networks (PCNs) will bring general practices together to work at scale. But what are they, how will they work and what benefits will they bring?

Primary care networks (PCNs) form a key building block of the NHS long-term plan. Bringing GP practices together to work at scale has been a policy priority for some years for a range of reasons, including improving the ability of practices to recruit and retain staff; to manage financial and estates pressures; to provide a wider range of services to patients and to more easily integrate with the wider health and care system.

While GP practices have been finding different ways of working together over many years, the NHS long-term plan and the new five-year framework for the GP contract, published in January 2019, put a more formal structure around this way of working, but without creating new statutory bodies. Since 1st July 2019, all except a handful of GP practices in England have come together in around 1,300 geographical networks covering populations of approximately 30–50,000 patients.

Most networks are geographically based and, between them, cover all practices within a clinical commissioning group (CCG) boundary. While practices are not mandated to join a network, they will lose out on significant extra funding if they do not, and their neighbouring networks will be funded to provide services to those patients whose practice is not covered by a network.

NHS England has significant ambitions for PCNs, with the expectation that they will be a key vehicle for delivering many of the commitments in the long-term plan and providing a wider range of services to patients. PCNs will eventually be

required to deliver a set of seven national service specifications. Five will start by April 2020: structured medication reviews, enhanced health in care homes, anticipatory care (with community services), personalised care and supporting early cancer diagnosis. The remaining two will start by 2021: cardiovascular disease case-finding and locally agreed action to tackle inequalities. To do this they will be expected to provide a wider range of primary care services to patients, involving a wider set of staff roles than might be feasible in individual practices, for example, first contact physiotherapy, extended access and social prescribing. Networks will receive specific funding for clinical pharmacists and social prescribing link workers in 2019/20, with funding for physiotherapists, physician associates and paramedics in subsequent years.



They will also be the footprint around which integrated community-based teams will develop, and community and mental health services will be expected to configure their services around PCN boundaries. These teams will provide services to people with more complex needs, providing proactive and anticipatory care. PCNs will also be expected to think about the wider health of their population, taking a proactive approach to managing population health and, from 2020/21, assessing the needs of their local population to identify people who would benefit from targeted, proactive support.

PCNs will be focused on service delivery, rather than on the planning and funding of services, responsibility for which will remain with commissioners, and are expected to be the building blocks around which integrated care systems are built. The ambition is that PCNs will be the mechanism by which primary care representation is made stronger in integrated care systems, with the accountable clinical directors from each network being the link between general practice and the wider system.

Much of the new money for the NHS announced in June 2018 is directed at primary and community services, and a large proportion of this will be channelled through networks. The main funding comes in the form of a large directed enhanced services payment (DES), which is an extension of

the core GP contract and must be offered to all practices. This will be worth up to £1.8 billion by 2023/24. It includes money to support the operation of the network and up to £891 million to help fund additional staff, through an additional roles reimbursement scheme.

Funding and responsibility for providing the enhanced access services, which pays GPs to give patients access to consultations outside core hours, will transfer to the network directed enhanced services payment by April 2021. In addition, a 'shared savings' scheme is proposed, under which PCNs will benefit financially from reductions in accident and emergency attendances and hospital admissions. There will also be separate national funding to help PCNs access digital-first support from April 2021, from an agreed list of suppliers on a new separate national framework.

The *Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme*, part of the directed enhanced services payment contract, will fund 70 per cent of the cost of the specific new clinical roles, with the different roles coming in over the period of the contract, starting with clinical pharmacists and social prescribing link workers in 2019/20. In 2020/21 the scheme will be extended to include physician associates and first contact physiotherapists, with community paramedics added in 2021/22. The funding is intended to cover only new staff rather than existing roles. Networks will have the flexibility to decide how many of each of the types of staff they wish to employ.

Practices are accountable to their commissioner for the delivery of network services. They will sign a network agreement, a legally binding agreement between the practices setting out how they will discharge the responsibilities of the network. PCNs can also use this agreement to set out the network's wider objectives and record the involvement of other partners, for example community health providers and pharmacies, though these partners will not be part of the core network, as that can only be entities who hold a GP contract.

Each network has an identified accountable clinical director. The main purpose of this role seems to be to provide a voice upwards to the wider integrated care system, and to be a single point of contact for the wider system, rather than to be accountable for the performance of the network or its constituent practices. The clinical directors are appointed by the members of the network.

Previous research by the King's Fund found that collaboration in general practice was most

successful when it had been generated organically by general practices over a number of years, underpinned by trust, relationships and support, and where there was a clear focus and agreement on the role of the collaboration (for example, whether it was to share back-office functions, provide community services or for quality improvement). Collaborations were less successful where there was a lack of clarity of purpose or engagement or over-optimistic expectations. There are also some technical issues including high costs of shared information systems or complexities around financial liabilities and premises which might need to be addressed.

PCNs in England will need support to build the trust and relationships needed for successful collaboration, resisting attempts to be over-optimistic in what can be achieved in the short term. The scale and complexity of the implementation and leadership challenge should not be underestimated, and those leading primary care networks will need significant support if they are to deliver the ambitions set out for them.

Primary care networks have the potential to benefit patients by offering improved access and extending the range of services available to them, and by helping to integrate primary care with wider health and community services.

Previous research on the impact of larger scale general practice on patient experience found mixed views. While some patients prioritise access above all else and are interested in the potential of larger collaborations to improve that access, others are more concerned about continuity and trusting relationships and are concerned these may be lost. Practices will need to work with their patient participation groups and the wider local community if they are going to address the needs of their local population.

This article has been adapted from a description of PCNs on the King's Fund website at www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/primary-care-networks-explained

A comment on PCNs ...

My experience as a patient participation group (PPG) chair and a member of the Nottingham City Clinical Commissioning Group People's Council suggests that PCNs are in and of themselves a step in the right direction and the structures of which they form a part are inherently sensible. As always, the potential problems lie in the funding and implementation. Within Nottinghamshire and Nottingham there seems to be goodwill and good

intentions but, as the King's Fund suggest, there are dangers in expecting too much too early. The Nottingham City PCNs have been set up with geography and compatibility in mind, which is good, but resources are limited and so it will take time to develop and then to bring on board social care and other related services, so as to fully reap the benefit of the PCN structures. My advice is to support your local PCN's development, be patient but be watchful. PCNs should help but they will not cure the underfunding of the NHS and Social Care.

Rob Kirkwood

7. Some Thoughts on the Climate Crisis

In 1979 the First World Climate Conference was organised by the World Meteorological Organisation. The conference issued a statement: *"It is now urgently necessary for the nations of the world*

- *To take full advantage of Man's present knowledge of climate.*
- *To take steps to improve significantly that knowledge,*
- *To foresee and prevent potential man-made changes in climate that might be averse to the well-being of humanity."* (Wikipedia)



Apparently, the world did take some notice and invested more resources in climate research. Nine years later, in June 1988, people gathered in Toronto for the "World Conference on Changing the Atmosphere". Much more research and many other activities have followed since, including of course warnings through films and popular music, such as science fiction writing for example, "The Road" by Cormac McCarthy, "Big Yellow Taxi" by Joni Mitchell (1970) and many others. Until recently

much of this has not been taken seriously enough by those with the power to make a real difference so that we now seem to have reached an extremely worrying, critical point in climate change.

Current activities highlighting the urgent need for action to be taken by all governments and peoples around the world are beginning to raise awareness hopefully before it is too late. This week (20.9.2019) school strikes which were started by one lone student, Greta Thunberg, in Sweden in August 2018 grew to world-wide participation.

She says, "No one is too small to make a difference" and speaking in Stockholm last year "Our lives are in your hands" "... This is a cry for help. ... To all the newspapers ... to all of you who have never treated this crisis as a crisis ... to all the influencers ... to all the political parties that pretend to take the climate crisis seriously ... every single person counts, every single kilo, everything counts. So please treat the climate crisis like the acute crisis it is and give us a future. Our lives are in your hands."

A very brave girl standing up to criticism and taking life very seriously, she is currently in New York speaking to the UN and other international organisations.

So, what can we, as the East Midlands UCU pensioners, do about it?

Rowena Dawson

8. UCU Retired Members Branch

Our branch has been meeting since 2008 and now has over 300 members. Our aims are listed below. We meet three times a year, often in places of interest to make part of a day out. Meetings focus on important issues for UCU pensioners and provide a chance to talk with other retired members.

A termly newsletter with articles of interest to retired UCU members is e-mailed to all branch members for whom we have addresses and to UCU branch secretaries in the East Midlands and to other RMBs.

Please let us have your personal e-mail address and let us know if it changes.

RMB Roles and Functions

- To represent the interests of retired members within the union.
- To represent the interests of retired union members within the wider union and pensioner movements.
- To provide a forum within the union for retired members to come together to consider and debate matters of mutual interest.
- To provide a resource of collective memory, advice and expertise in support of the union, in particular to those still in active employment.
- To provide active support, where appropriate, by involving the broadest section of the branch in support of the wider interests of the union and its members, including support for those still in active employment.

**For more information
please contact** Julian Atkinson

e-mail: secretary@ucu-em-rmb.org.uk
telephone: 01773 532105

website: www.ucu-em-rmb.org.uk
twitter: @ucu-em-rmb

East Midlands Branch officers and committee

Chair: Angus McLardy chair@ucu-em-rmb.org.uk

Vice-Chair: Rowena Dawson vice-chair@ucu-em-rmb.org.uk

Secretary: Julian Atkinson secretary@ucu-em-rmb.org.uk

Assistant Secretary: Rob Kirkwood
asst-secretary@ucu-em-rmb.org.uk

Treasurer: Brian Hambidge treasurer@ucu-em-rmb.org.uk

Equalities officer: Judy Wills
equalities-officer@ucu-em-rmb.org.uk

Membership: Greg Cejer membership@ucu-em-rmb.org.uk

Newsletter: Bob Haskins
newsletter@ucu-em-rmb.org.uk

East Midlands regional UCU committee
representatives: Brian Hambidge, Rob Kirkwood