

Star in Our Schools

Thanks to every colleague and school that nominated school support staff for being a Star in 2019.

The award last November saw the highest ever number of nominations and schools participate in UNISON's award, that recognises the brilliant work done by support staff in our schools.

The overall winner, Ann Roth from Hall Green Primary, met the Mayor for tea. (see picture below), trying on the Mayoral robes for size. (see Sandwell UNISON's website for more pictures – www.sandwellunison.co.uk.) Ann has worked at Hall Green for over 40 years, helping three generations of some families attending the school. Her nominee stated, "She dedicates herself to her role and puts the children first... She really is a star."



Sandwell UNISON's overall winner of Stars in Our Schools, Ann Roth - centre

UNISON's Survey at Children's Trust Highlights Problems

Sandwell UNISON's survey of members working at Sandwell Children's Trust shows that morale has deteriorated. 83% of UNISON members responding to the survey said that they had not seen any positive changes since transferring from the Council to the Trust in April 2018.

Tony Barnsley, Branch Secretary for Sandwell UNISON added, "Whilst protecting the most vulnerable children in the Borough our members are saying, loud and clear, that they are overworked and under-valued. Almost two-thirds said their workload was not manageable, with 89% saying they had worked more than their contracted hours to complete their tasks.

Despite the fresh start promised by Sandwell Children's Trust, not one of our members said that management had fully implemented their twelve reasons for staff to stay in Sandwell.

The Trust is failing to retain staff and we have been asking management what the new plan is for several months. The amount of agency workers is higher than twelve months ago, with a third of all social workers being agency workers. This not only costs £millions more, it doesn't help the children of Sandwell keep the same social worker.

Hopefully, the results from the UNISON survey will act as a wake-up call for the Trust to change for the better. If management are going to improve the service, they need to listen to what our members are saying, and not be in denial of how our members feel."

Sandwell Councillors Refuse to Declare A Climate Emergency

On 11 November 2019, Labour Councillors refused a joint trade union request for them to declare a climate emergency.

If Sandwell Council does not declare a climate emergency, will it make the necessary changes needed to reduce its carbon footprint? What UNISON proposed were practical measures for the Council to aim towards becoming zero carbon neutral. Something that all institutions of government must act upon quickly, if the worst effects of global warming are to be avoided. UNISON's suggested measures included:-

- To offer free parking and charge points throughout the Borough for zero emission vehicles.
- To invest in energy saving measures in all council properties, both council housing and council workplaces. This to include insulation and installation of solar panels where appropriate.
- To invest in a new fleet of zero emission vehicles for the Council, which would also save on fuel costs.
- Support days of action such as the Global Climate Action Day and encourage participation in legal events.