

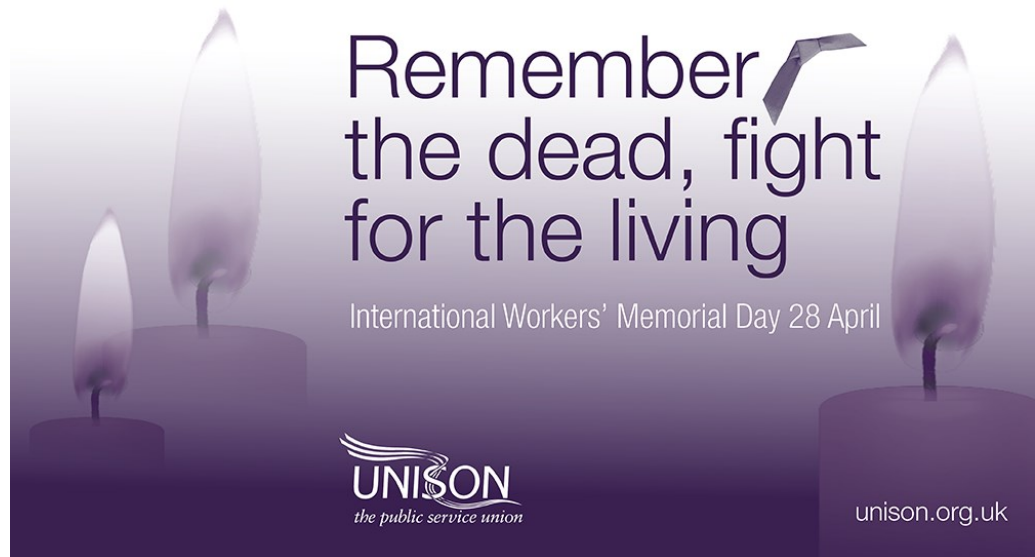
# The Update

28 Apr 2021

The latest news and announcements from Derbyshire UNISON

## Workplace safety

On International Workers' Memorial Day, UNISON's acting national officer for health and safety Robert Baughan looks back at a year when workplace safety took centre stage



## Workplace and work safety affects us all

**Wednesday 28 April is International Workers' Memorial Day. This is the day when we get together to remember all those who have died through their work, and rededicate ourselves to the fight for the living.**

But never has this annual day – and the act of remembrance – felt more important.

Thousands of workers across the UK will be continuing to care for those suffering from COVID-19 or delivering the vital public services that protect us and keep us and our communities going – as they have over the past year of pandemic.

Their health and safety is entwined with everyone's health and safety. And in working as they

have, they're potentially putting their safety – and possibly even their lives – at risk. UNISON says 'thank you' to every single key worker for everything they are doing for our communities during this unprecedented period.

In many cases these workers know that, simply by doing their jobs, they are putting themselves at risk. The efforts of those working in the health and social care setting have rightly been acknowledged. Yet there are also

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many others - such as those working in childcare, police, refuse collection, hostels, rescue centres, utilities and transport services, to name just a few - whose work and dedication often goes unacknowledged.

Tragically, some of these workers have died during the pandemic.

In some cases, there will have been cases where not enough was done to protect them - whether in terms of a failure to enforce social distancing, a failure to protect workers with underlying health conditions or a failure to provide adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep them safe.

While improvements have been seen in some areas, more needs to be done - specifically in relation to assessing the risks our members are facing and ensuring that all staff who require it are getting the PPE needed to do the job safely.

This union has never been afraid to demand the highest standards for workers - to speak out and hold the government to account on providing the right PPE when staff need it, and to hold bad employers to account who are not doing enough to keep their workers safe.

Over the past year of the pandemic, UNISON has made a concrete difference to members' lives, by helping to improve their safety at work.

Our campaign on PPE made a difference on improving supply, while behind the scenes the union also had success in improving guidance for employers on PPE - and much more.

UNISON's work also helped encourage the Health and Safety Executive to introduce random spot checks in the health and social care sectors.

While such moves are limited in number - and not at the level that the union would ideally want - they at least send the message to employers that they will be held to account if they ignore the safety of their workforce.

The union has continued to grow throughout the pandemic, particularly in schools and the social care sector, while there has also been an increase in the number of trained safety reps.

The past year has given a timely reminder that unionised workplaces are safer workplaces.

On this International Workers' Memorial Day UNISON is calling on everyone to hold a minute's silence, at 11am, specifically to remember those who have died of COVID-19 while carrying out their work.

Other things you can do include:

- tweet at us - @unisontheunion - with your pictures of public service workers, whether of yourselves or colleagues continuing to do the jobs that are keeping us all safe;
- if you are having a problem getting PPE, let us know;
- email any other COVID-19 safety related issues to [healthandsafety@unison.co.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@unison.co.uk).