

## **UNISON YHN/CVS REVIEW 2013 Derek Muse - Branch Committee – 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2014**

### **YHN**

The last twelve months has seen a lot of changes at YHN as they continue with the implementation of the Concierge Review and started afresh on reviews of Finance, Property Services and Housing Management as they look to manage the changes of the Government's Welfare Reform. Added to all of this is the uncertainty for staff caused by NCC reviewing its relationship with YHN via an Options Appraisal process. Also we have continued to monitor the progress of those staff designated as "red circles" following the implementation of Phase 2 of Single Status – we are now only around seven months from when our protection deal comes to an end.

Welfare Reform Service Review – This review has resulted in a total change in the way YHN delivers its front line Housing Management Services – moving from generic to specialist roles the review included around 250 staff – more than a quarter of YHN's workforce. Members concerns were initially around maintaining current grades and not seeing a reduction in the number of posts available. As a result of the review all grades were maintained and there was no reduction in posts overall with several promotion opportunities being created for staff. While it was agreed that there should be some form of selection process to fit staff into appropriate roles UNISON stated on several occasions that we did not expect anyone to fall out of the recruitment and selection process in the WRSR – something management acknowledged as no staff were currently being monitored for performance issues. However as the process continued some long serving staff were either not short listed for posts or were not appointed following interview. This has had a knock on affect for everyone else still to go through this process as the recruitment and selection process' emphasis should have been finding the right people for the right role not be based on competence with previous experience not taken into account. UNISON met with members in January where it was decided to inform management that a Collective Grievance would be submitted to complain about the way in which the process had been managed. The result of this was management agreeing to review the final two rounds of the process still to take place and altering the selection process which meant that staff could be slotted into posts without the need for interview – a result!

Community Care Alarm Service – Consultation has begun on introducing a personal care element to the role of some CCAS staff – Mobile Wardens. While the intention is to recognise some aspects of the role that staff already carry out – and get CQC accreditation – obviously for some members this is a fairly large change in what they are currently expected to do.

Finance – YHN's Finance Team was reviewed this year. While not without its difficulties the new structure after full consultation is up and running but with the future of the Housing Revenue Account now being discussed it remains an unsettling time for our members in this section.

Concierge Review – This is still being slowly rolled out – some members have now left on VR with more to follow over the coming months. Overall this review has seen a reduction in FTE posts of around 40 but with no compulsory redundancies. New shift patterns that were introduced don't seem to be fit for purpose and negotiations are about to start on an alternative.

**TWAM** - Following the TUPE transfer of staff to Sunderland CC after they withdrew from TWAM's joint working agreement with four other local authorities TWAM continue to be challenged by the swingeing cuts that are facing Arts and Culture across the country. They continue to look at innovative ways to raise funds, they have started to charge for some of the more popular travelling exhibitions, they are currently reviewing how they operate their Front of House roasters and for the first time they have circulated a general trawl amongst staff for VR.

On a more positive note as we are now in the final year of protection for those classified as red circles in Phase 2 of Single Status – TWAM now has no staff requiring red circle protection.

**Newcastle College** – 2013 has been a further year of restructuring and redundancies at Newcastle College. Consultation took place for staff transferring to Askham Bran College and Intraining this year. UNISON successfully challenged the lack of consultation in some of these transfers resulting in pay-outs for some of our members. Newcastle College Group while engaged in pay discussions for much of the year did agree to sign up to paying their staff the Living Wage – though so far this has not extended to those they contract work out to.

**Tyne Tunnel** – Following extensive consultation our members in Tyne Tunnel2 will be moving on to new 4 on – 4 off 12 hours shift patterns from the end of March 2014. These will replace the long standing archaic patterns of 7 on 2 off.

**CVS** – This sector continues to be extremely casework intensive. Overall we have engaged with over 70 different organisations over the last twelve months and have had an unprecedented number of disciplinaries where members jobs were at risk (the majority in which we were successful in keeping our members in a job!). The YHN /CVS sector was also responsible for over 70% of the Branch's referrals for legal advice. The main issues in this sector continue to be around those who provide personal care with UNISON nationally taking up members concerns on zero hours contracts, ridiculously low time slots carers are given to attend to clients' needs and the questionable practice of organisations not paying staff travel time between appointments which calls in to question if minimum wage requirements are being met. We have seen fairly major restructures and redundancies within Dimensions, CQC, Age UK and Mental Health Matters and the unfortunate folding of Learning First. On a more positive note we have seen the Fabrick Group which includes our members in Norcare sign up to paying their staff the Living Wage and they look to further cement their partnership by forming a new organisation with Norcare at its head to bid for future contracts.