



Dorset NEU Branch and General Meeting

Wednesday 26th November 2025

Key Takeaways

- The NEU successfully supported a strike action by support staff at Cathedral Schools Trust (CST) in Bristol and North Somerset, resulting in a victory for fair pay practices.
- Dorset NEU voted to donate £500 to the hardship fund supporting those who participated in the CST strike action.
- The NEU is holding a special conference on February 28, 2026, to debate withdrawing from an agreement that restricts active recruitment of support staff.
- Annual NEU conference will be held March 30-April 2, 2026, in Brighton, with delegate positions available for Dorset members.
- Mark Chutter shared how collective grievance action successfully led to the removal of a CEO and senior directors at Authentic Education Trust.
- GMB has been conducting what was described as aggressive recruitment in schools, targeting NEU members.

Discussed Topics

Support Staff Strike at Cathedral Schools Trust (CST)

A video was shown demonstrating the successful strike action by support staff at CST in Bristol and North Somerset.

- **Details**
 - **Rebecca:** Explained this was the first major strike by support staff in NEU history, affecting multiple schools. The strike was about support staff being denied 5 months of pay uplift.
 - **Rebecca:** Around 300 teachers refused to cross picket lines in solidarity, resulting in 7 schools closing during strike days.
 - **Amy:** Asked which unions the support staff belonged to.
 - **Rebecca:** Clarified they were in NEU and Unison, with NEU taking the lead role in the action.
- **Conclusion**
 - The strike demonstrated the power of collective action and solidarity.
 - Dorset NEU committee proposed donating £500 to the hardship fund for those who participated in the strike.
 - The proposal was seconded by Peter and approved by vote.

Annual Conference 2026

Discussion about the upcoming annual conference and its importance.

- **Details**

- **Rebecca:** Explained the conference will be held 30th March – 2nd April 2026, in Brighton.
- **Rebecca:** Described it as the largest decision-making event of the union where policy and rule changes are debated and voted on.
- **Rebecca:** Highlighted additional benefits including fringe meetings, CPD opportunities, networking, and exhibitions.
- **Serena:** Confirmed it's a great experience and worth attending.
- **Peter:** Shared that attending energizes members and makes them more active, though it can be tiring with many meetings.

- **Conclusion**

- Dorset has delegate spaces available for members interested in attending.
- Accommodation, travel, and childcare support are provided for delegates.
- Interested members should email Rebecca (rebecca.pearce@neu.org.uk) for more information or to express interest in attending.

Special Conference on Support Staff Recruitment

Discussion about the upcoming special conference focused on support staff representation.

- **Details**

- **Rebecca:** Explained the conference will be held on February 28, 2026, to debate withdrawing from an agreement that restricts NEU from actively recruiting support staff.
- **Rebecca:** Noted that NEU currently has 63,000+ support staff members, but approximately two-thirds of education support workers still have no union representation.
- **Rebecca:** Emphasised that NEU cannot currently sit at the national bargaining table for support staff.
- **Ali:** Raised concerns about potential consequences of withdrawing from the TUC if that becomes necessary.
- **Rebecca:** Acknowledged this is a pivotal moment that could transform representation for thousands of education workers.
- **Peter:** Suggested it's important to have a balance of support staff and teachers attending the conference.

- **Conclusion**

- Dorset has 11 delegate spaces available, with 3 currently filled.
- Interested members should email Rebecca (rebecca.pearce@neu.org.uk) for more information or to express interest in attending.

- Rebecca will prioritize inviting support staff members first before opening remaining spaces to other members.

Taking on a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)

Mark Chutter shared his experience successfully challenging leadership at Authentic Education Trust.

• Details

- **Mark:** Explained how staff at Wey Valley Academy raised concerns about the CEO and senior directors regarding financial mismanagement and lack of visibility.
- **Mark:** Described how they worked with the lead rep for the Trust to organize meetings across all academies.
- **Mark:** Highlighted the power of filing a collective grievance with specific evidence of misconduct.
- **Mark:** Noted that school leadership (SLT) was supportive of their actions, which was crucial to their success.
- **Amy:** Asked about the type of evidence provided and whether there was coordination with head teachers' unions.
- **Mark:** Explained evidence included emails, witness statements, and accounts of specific events.

• Conclusion

- The collective action resulted in the CEO and four senior directors leaving the Trust.
- The Trust is now likely to be taken over by United Learning.
- Key strategies included: connecting with other academies in the Trust, having a lead rep, holding cross-Trust meetings, and creating a collective grievance.

GMB Recruitment Activities

Discussion about GMB's recruitment practices in schools.

• Details

- **Ali:** Raised that GMB had been aggressively recruiting in schools by arranging meetings.
- **Ali:** Shared that when she drafted a letter to the regional TUC about this, a Unison rep accused NEU of poaching.
- **Rebecca:** Described how GMB representatives visited schools under the guise of discussing a pay campaign but were actually recruiting and criticizing NEU.
- **Rebecca:** Emphasized that NEU representatives never disparage other unions but simply state facts about their presence in schools.

• Conclusion

- Ali will pursue the matter at the Trades Council meeting.
- The meeting agreed that Geoff could accompany Ali to the Trades Council meeting for additional support.

Challenges

- Potential consequences if NEU withdraws from the agreement restricting support staff recruitment, including possible expulsion from the TUC.
- Aggressive recruitment tactics by GMB targeting NEU members in schools.
- Concerns about what happens to schools after successfully challenging a MAT's leadership (potential takeover by another trust).

Action Items

- **Rebecca**
 - Compile and distribute meeting notes including Mark's written document about the MAT action.
 - Email support staff members about the Special Conference delegate opportunities.
- **Mark**
 - Write a document detailing the strategies used in the collective grievance against Authentic Education Trust.
- **Ali**
 - Raise the issue of GMB's recruitment practices at the Trades Council meeting.
- **Amy**
 - Follow up with Mark to discuss collective grievance strategies in more detail.
- **Members interested in conferences**
 - Contact Rebecca via email (rebecca.pearce@neu.org.uk) if interested in attending the Annual Conference or Special Conference.



Support Staff Strike at Cathedral Schools Trust (CST)

Areas: Bristol & North Somerset

Unions: NEU & UNISON

Why Did Support Staff Strike?

- CST had been **withholding back-pay** for annual pay uplifts since at least 2017.
 - Pay rises agreed nationally in **April** were only applied from **September**, leaving staff **five months short** each year.
 - Many affected staff are on **minimum wage and term-time contracts**, losing **thousands of pounds** compared to colleagues elsewhere.
-

Strike Action

- **Dates:** 5–6 Nov, then 11, 13, 18, 19, 20 Nov.
 - **Schools:** All 12 CST schools across Bristol & North Somerset.
 - **Impact:**
 - Over **100 teachers pledged not to cross picket lines**; in reality, around **300 educators refused**, causing **seven schools to close**.
 - Strong solidarity from teachers, parents, and pupils—some students refused to cross picket lines.
 - **Hardship Fund:** Launched to support striking staff.
-

Outcome

- After ACAS talks, CST agreed to a **financial settlement**, including back-pay.
 - **100% of union members accepted the deal within two hours**—a major victory.
 - This dispute highlights:
 - The importance of **joint union action**.
 - The need for **fair and timely pay implementation**.
-

Key Message:

This strike shows the power of collective action and solidarity. It sets a precedent for future disputes and reinforces the need for transparency in pay practices.

NEU Annual Conference 2026 and Why Attending Matters

When & Where

- **Dates:** Monday 30 March – Thursday 2 April 2026
 - **Location:** Brighton Centre, Brighton, UK
 - Held annually just before Easter, this is the **largest decision-making event of the union**.
-

What Happens at Conference?

- **Policy & Rule Changes:** Conference is the union's **supreme decision-making body**, where motions are debated and voted on.
 - **Fringe Meetings & CPD:** Includes professional development sessions, workshops, and fringe events on key education issues.
 - **Networking:** Meet up to **1,600 delegates** from across the UK—district reps, sector specialists, and equality groups.
 - **Exhibition & Resources:** Access to union resources, campaigns, and exhibitors relevant to education.
-

Why Should You Attend as an NEU Member?

1. **Shape Union Policy:** Your voice matters—decisions made here influence national education policy and union priorities.
 2. **Represent Your District:** Ensure your local issues are heard at the highest level.
 3. **Professional Growth:** Gain insights from CPD sessions and debates on pressing education topics.
 4. **Build Networks:** Connect with colleagues, activists, and union leaders—share strategies and experiences.
 5. **Stay Informed:** Be first to know about upcoming campaigns, funding fights, and policy changes.
-

How to Attend

- Delegates are **elected by districts**. Contact your **district secretary** if you want to stand as a delegate.
 - Accommodation, travel, and childcare (crèche) support are provided for elected delegates.
-



NEU Special Conference on Support Staff

The **NEU Special Conference on Support Staff** is a pivotal event for members because it addresses one of the most pressing issues in education: the representation, pay, and working conditions of support staff.

What is the Special Conference About?

- The NEU Executive has called this conference to **debate whether the union should withdraw from the 2017 TUC agreement** that restricts NEU from actively recruiting support staff. This agreement has long prevented NEU from gaining full recognition in national pay negotiations for support staff, leaving them underrepresented compared to teachers.
- The conference will also consider strategies for **building union density among support staff**, who make up a rapidly growing section of NEU membership (over 63,000 members).

Why is This Important?

- **Support staff are underrepresented:** Around **66% of education support workers have no union representation**, making them vulnerable to poor pay and conditions.
- **Pay and conditions are inequitable:** Many support staff face term-time-only contracts, below-inflation pay rises, and are often first in line for redundancies.
- **NEU wants recognition:** Without recognition on the National Joint Council (NJC), NEU cannot negotiate national pay agreements for support staff. This conference is about changing that.

Why Should NEU Members Attend?

1. **Shape Union Policy:** The conference is democratic—members will vote on motions that could redefine NEU's role in representing support staff.
2. **Amplify Support Staff Voices:** Support staff are the fastest-growing section of NEU. This is your chance to ensure their concerns are heard and acted upon.
3. **Defend Against Reforms:** Upcoming government reforms threaten support staff jobs and conditions. Collective action is essential to resist these changes.
4. **Build Solidarity:** United action by teachers and support staff strengthens bargaining power and workplace solidarity.

How to Attend

- Delegates are **elected by districts**. Contact your **district secretary** if you want to stand as a delegate.
-