



## Winds of Change

**E**xtrême weather events have once again been making headlines around the world.

Climate change impacts are ever more apparent, emphasising how much this is a health and safety issue for us all. Trade unionists in Scotland will soon have some much needed new resources on well designed workplace adaptation solutions.

These will help look at the risks and impacts of extreme heat, flooding, wildfires and other weather-related disruption, including how these will affect workers in numerous ways, such as provision of suitable workwear, conditions for outdoor working, overheating in schools, hospitals, warehouses and the need for climate resilient infrastructure.

UNISON is working with other trade unions and Sniffer, the charity which delivers the Adaptation Scotland programme for the Scottish government, on a project to develop a handbook/toolkit for trade unionists on adaptation at work.

A [short free webinar in July](#) and a longer one in September are open to all trade

union members, with the presentations recorded for use by branches to promote discussions and action.

Members can also take part in a survey which will help contribute to the content. Supported by the STUC, the project will see the new handbook/toolkit launched before the UN COP26 climate talks in Glasgow in November.

Do you think your employers are doing enough on this aspect of the climate emergency? Cutting emissions – climate change mitigation – may be the first thing most people think is key, but planning for and adapting to a warmer planet with more frequent and severe weather extremes is essential.

Our society, economy, workplaces and environment are not currently designed to operate in these new challenging conditions.

Although the webinars and survey will be of particular interest to health & safety reps and green/environment reps, all members are welcome, with no prior knowledge needed.

Three things to do today:

- [Read about the impact of COVID on disable workers](#)
- [Learn about poverty in Scotland](#)
- [Ask a friend to join](#)

## No Going Back

Investment in recovery means investing in public services.

One of the things shown up by the pandemic is what is, and who are, essential. In recovery it makes sense to prioritise investment in the core activities that our society needs. Things that need to be done.

By core activities we mean essential goods and services like housing, utility supply, health, transport, education and care. This *foundational economy* of branches and networks provides the infrastructure of everyday life. Serving our essential daily household needs, keeping us safe and civilised.

Investment in these areas of economic life can provide reliable incomes for workers, with returns that go into the community rather than offshore bank accounts. These are areas of the economy less vulnerable to economic shocks and more reliable over the medium and long-term than foreign direct investment. Whether it's called the *Foundational Economy* or *Community Wealth Building* this a much needed alternative to the increasingly desperate beauty contest to attract footloose global capital that has lain behind most approaches to the economy in recent decades. UNISON has outlined our approach in a number of places including [here](#) and in our manifesto [Essential For Recovery](#)

# Equality Budgets

Public services are essential to overcoming the deep-seated inequalities in Scotland. Therefore the budget decisions round services need to be scrutinised for their equalities impact. Making decisions without this analysis means that cuts can and do increase inequality

The Improvement Service [gender budgeting guide for councillors](#) is intended to highlight the sort of questions that councillors should have been asking about budgets. There is therefore an opportunity to both find out the answers and ask councillors if they have asked them and if not why not?

While this guide focuses of the protected characteristic of sex, the same processes should be followed for [all of those groups](#) covered by the Equality Act and the [Fairer Scotland Duty](#).

The guide gives a snapshot of women's economic "realities". Examples include:

- Scotland's gender pay gap is 13.3%
- 85% of those who are deemed 'inactive' in the labour market due to caring responsibilities are women
- Median hourly earnings for women was £11.81 per hour compared to £13.89 per hour for men
- 78% of women earned the living wage or more compared to 84% of men.

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Suggested question to support budget scrutiny are split into two sections process and practice: here is a selection:

## Process

- How has local data and information been used to inform spending proposals and make spending decisions?
- Have these decisions been subjected to equalities impact assessment?
- Are the EQIAs publicly available? If not, why not?
- What actions are taken to ensure that spending decisions at

departmental levels are consistent with commitments to gender equality?

- What is the knowledge and understanding across stakeholders in the local authority of duties on equalities?
- What progress has been made in advancing equality and in tackling underlying inequalities?

## Are working conditions in the public sector conducive to greater gender equality or hindering it?

### Practice

- Bearing in mind the diversity of women, who is benefiting most from expansion or losing most from cuts in this year's budget?
- Has adequate funding been provided to cover urgent needs of women for health, care, housing and VAWG services, for themselves and for those they care for?
- Does the initiative have unintended impacts on, or create barriers for, specific groups of women and men?
- How will this policy impact people in the long-term? For example, policies that make it necessary for women to stay doing unpaid care may have negative impacts on women's life time earnings and pensions.
- Does this policy look at differences within particular groups of women and men? For example, age, race, socio-economic circumstances
- Is spending on public services that promote gender equality expanding, or is it being cut?
- Are working conditions in the public sector (pay, career prospects and work patterns) conducive to greater gender equality or hindering it?

Branches meeting with elected representatives can use this guide to see if they have been asking these questions during decision making . The Improvement Services produced these guides to help councillors do their jobs properly. We can use the guides to give them any additional support they need to do so too.

## Being Reasonable

One in 12 disabled workers say they have been subject to bullying or harassment at work, according to new [TUC research](#).

12 per cent were concerned their disability, health condition or impairment had affected their chances of a promotion in the future. And 7 per cent had their commitment to their job

I am more than my disability



#BeReasonable

questioned.

With BBC [research](#) showing disabled people's needs have been forgotten in the pandemic it's probably no surprise to hear that some employers are not providing disabled workers with the reasonable adjustments and support they need at work.

During the pandemic over half of disabled workers report that they worked from home, a big increase from the previous 12%. Sadly almost half (46 per cent) of those who requested reasonable adjustments failed to get all or some of the different or additional reasonable adjustments they needed.

Whether working from home or as we begin to move back into workplaces it is essential that the provisions of the Equality Act are not overlooked. The Act is clear about the need for employers to make reasonable adjustments for workers with a disability. The act provides no protection without monitoring and enforcement of it's provisions.

Branches will be playing an important role in monitoring this and taking up issues for members. Employers and organisations like the Equality and Human Rights Commission





## Council Staff Deliver

During the pandemic council staff demonstrated their “skills and flexibility” as they were either redeployed to new posts or had to rapidly change ways of working due to the COVID crisis, according to Audit Scotland.

Despite the cuts to councils’ budgets laid out in Audit Scotland’s report in [January](#) their [Local Government Overview](#) published in May shows that workers at Scotland’s councils have ensured that communities continue to get support.

### Key points

- “The Covid-19 pandemic is having a profound impact on all aspects of society, including the economy, jobs, and the physical and mental health of the public
- Relationships with communities have been vital
- Levels of service disruption have varied
- Some services were delivered virtually
- The workforce demonstrated the versatility to take on new roles
- There were significant changes in council governance structures and processes
- Councils continue to face significant financial challenges, and these have been exacerbated by the pandemic
- The Scottish Government has provided substantial additional financial support, but the nature and timing of funding has created further challenges for councils
- Councils have started to plan for longer term recovery from the crisis
- There has been some ongoing learning resulting from the emergency response to the pandemic”

The pandemic has shown the importance of public services. Workers have put in an huge effort to support communities through the crisis. There is lots to reflect on in the report. Little improvement will come without funding.

## Workers Voices

The recently published *working lives in Scotland report* from CIPD has plenty to interest UNISON activists. This is the second iteration of the Working Lives Scotland report, which builds on work carried out by the CIPD over the last few years through their Good Work Index.

The report focuses on the results of a CIPD survey. The report is structured round the Fair Work Convention’s dimensions. There is also lots of useful information on the impact of COVID on working lives .

### Key Points

- Workers want the option to work from home at least some of the time. But 43% of all employees do work that can’t be done from home.

## Homeworkers report worse work–life balance and higher work-loads

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- 26% of employees feel their work impacts negatively on their mental health
- 25% reporting negative impacts on their physical health.
- Carers and key workers are more likely to report going to work despite not being well.

- The median pay of key workers is **significantly lower** than for non-key workers.
- Less than a third (31%) of employees believe their job offers good prospects for career advancement

## 26% of workers feel their work impacts negatively on their mental health

- 51% believe their job offers good opportunities to develop their skills.
- Workers who have been put on furlough report lower levels of job security.
- While those on higher salaries report higher levels of job security.
- 34% of all employees report their workload as too high in a normal week. Key workers and those working from home all the time are more likely to report workloads that are too high.
- 13% of those working fully from home say they don’t have a suitable space and 12% say they don’t have suitable broadband to do their job effectively.
- Employees in better paid jobs, management roles and those working flexibly report higher levels of job autonomy.
- 19% of employees say they have no voice channel at work at all.

# Poverty In Scotland 2021

For the first time Child Poverty Action Group's book Poverty In Scotland is available to read for free [online](#) as well as being a "real" book.

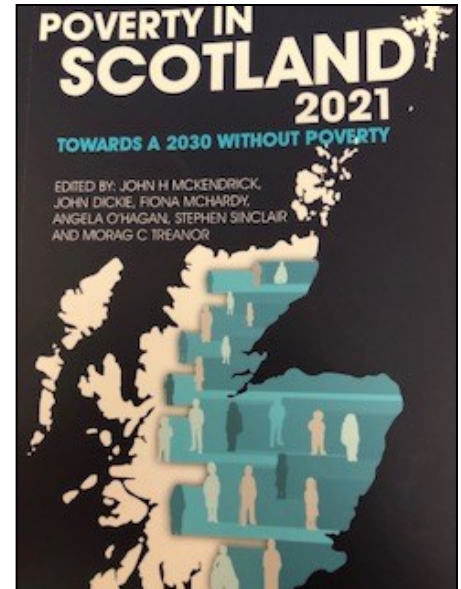
This latest, in a series of books, covers both the nature of poverty in Scotland and detailed evidence on the picture in Scotland. As well as academics experts the book brings together a range of voices from community activists and advocates and service providers.

There are a range of chapters on the incidence of poverty, who lies in poverty and the impact of poverty on people's lives. Section four looks at recent policy developments and the increasing participation of people who live in poverty as experts by experience in policy decision making.

Section 5 sets out a range of articles from people active in the public and third sector organisations about tools for tackling poverty. Helen Martin from the Fair Work Convention covers fair work and Kay Sillars from UNISON Scotland writes about the childcare workforce.

Other chapters cover:

- Public finance and institutional ambition
- Community wealth building
- Social security



- Education
- Health
- Social care
- Transport
- Housing
- Climate (In) justice
- Affordable and accessible credit

So plenty to interest UNISON members for both their UNISON campaigns and their day jobs.

## End Zero Hours Contracts

Black workers make up around one in six people on zero hours contracts despite making up only one in nine of total employees. Another reason we need to fight to end them.

[Research](#) for the TUC shows that black workers are more at risk of precarious work than the population as a whole. One in 20 (4.5 per cent) women workers from a BME background have zero hours contracts compared to just 2.5 per cent of white men.

More than half of BME workers on a variable-hours contract would like a fixed-hours contract. Just 27 per cent would prefer their existing arrangement.

Zero hours contracts mean workers do not know how much work they will have from week to week which means they have no idea what they will earn. Not knowing how much you will earn makes it impossible to plan anything far less budget.

While this is often sold as flexible working, workers seldom have the flexibility to choose:

refusing work can lead to less offers of hours. Many therefore accept any hours they are offered.

The report shows how racial discriminations traps BAME workers in low pay and insecure work. COVID has added to this with increased unemployment and being over-represented in jobs with a higher risk of dying from COVID.

The report calls for

- Banning Zero Hours Contracts
- Ethnic Minority Pay Gap Reporting
- Corporate Reporting Obligations

This would mean employers would have to report on their employment practices and their impact on the workforce. For example number and proportion of workers on zero hours contracts, the ability to transfer onto contracts that reflect normal hours of work; the notice period given for shifts.

Joining a trade union will mean workers have support to make sure this type of monitoring takes place and leads to action. . #Join a Union

If you would like more information on any of the articles in this newsletter or have information you would like to share in the next issue please contact: [Kay Sillars](#) in the Bargaining and Campaigns team on [k.sillars@unison.co.uk](mailto:k.sillars@unison.co.uk)



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