

# Public services and the good society

Investing for today and tomorrow

April 2016

**Manifesto  
Election 2016**

**UNISON**

*Scotland*

## Foreword

UNISON members deliver the services that are essential for a decent society – and in many cases life itself. They do so in a time when the pressures upon them are increasing – demand is rising, budgets are being cut. This document makes the case for public services and those who provide them. It has two aims, the first is to help UNISON members and branches to engage with the election, the second is to ask the question of those who would seek UNISON members support – what are you going to do to protect and improve public services, for those who use them and those who provide them?

Scotland needs well funded properly staffed publicly run accountable and responsive public services. Securing them is UNISON's priority and should be the priority of anyone hoping to be the Scottish Government. We want to see a Parliament using the powers at its disposal in order to enhance our public services - to create a fairer and sustainable Scotland.

Lilian Macer  
Scottish Convenor

Mike Kirby  
Scottish Secretary



Lilian Macer, UNISON Scottish Convenor



Mike Kirby, UNISON Scottish Secretary



## Ten ways to strengthen Scotland's public services, economy and society

- 1 Recognise that public services are essential for a decent society. They are an investment in our future.
- 2 The Scottish Parliament should be using all its powers to fund public services and combat austerity
- 3 Investment in services prevents long-term damage to communities and supports local economies
- 4 Wage led growth will be good for workers, public services and the economy
- 5 The parliament should be making full use of its powers to tackle inequality and its impact on health.
- 6 Councils cannot continue to bear the brunt of austerity. Local democracy should be supported with a proper reform of local taxation and fair funding.
- 7 Tackling the housing crisis with a big social house building programme, stronger rights for private renters and a Warm Homes Act to tackle fuel poverty.
- 8 Recognising the role of every member of the education team in delivering better outcomes.
- 9 Developing a balanced police workforce by ending the cosmetic police officer target
- 10 Keep Scotland's water public, ensuring a balanced energy policy and taking real action on climate change.



## Public Services and the Good Society

Public services are not optional in a modern society, they are essential to civilised life. They are the most efficient way to deliver the things we need. They are not just a safety net; they hold our society together, making our daily lives healthier, safer, cleaner, secure and more fun.

The services delivered by UNISON members go from the life saving to the life enhancing, from acute medical services and clean water to the classroom assistant helping our children learn. The collective provision of these services is not an accident. Public services arose largely out of the failure of private provision, the realisation that only through organising on a collective basis could the necessities of life be provided.

Our public services are also a visible expression of values which go well beyond those of the market. They are an embodiment of the idea of mutual obligation, an expression of community and continuity, of solidarity between people and across generations. Without them we would all be poorer. One of the key responsibilities of any government is to protect and enhance the public realm. Defending and enhancing services is a key part of this.

As a society we have invested, and continue to invest large amounts of financial and social capital in our public services. It is one of the things that makes Scotland a rich nation. Those who would argue for a more equal society should embrace the equalising potential of comprehensive public services. The taxation and expenditure involved is in itself an equalising feature. Public services also represent equality in action because they provide for everyone – expected to deal with people equitably and not on the basis of their wealth or privilege.

## Investing in Today and Tomorrow

Maintaining investment in public services is essential, both for the future of public services, but also to create and sustain economic recovery. The public sector can lead the recovery by both delivering services necessary to all and providing the stimulus to support the private sector. Conversely, not funding services is literally anti-social behaviour, meaning failure today and preventing the establishment of the sound base from which to tackle longer- term challenges.

## Cuts Can't Deliver

Public services are under severe strain in Scotland. In many sectors this is planned to continue with cuts equal or worse than those experienced so far. Further swingeing cuts cannot be delivered without having a severe impact on services and jobs. We need a Scottish Government that will reverse not implement austerity. Describing cuts as 'efficiency savings' has to end; recognising that funding services properly is in fact more likely to make them efficient and deliver real value for money.

"Staff reduced due to budget cuts, more work less staff, increase in staff sickness due to workload pressure and stress."  
*College staff*

The role played by public services in supporting local economies needs to be recognised. By far the biggest element in the budget for public services is wages. Job losses and pay constraint remove demand from local economies – so investing in services makes economic as well as social sense.

## Quality Services need Quality Workplaces

Services can only be as good as the workforce delivering them. Ensuring proper staffing levels, decent wages, security of employment and adequate training is of importance to the sort of society we live in. There has been good progress in recent years in Scotland in securing the Scottish Living Wage for workers in our public services. This needs to be extended by using public procurement, not just on wages, but by driving up employment standards generally. Procurement should also be used to discourage tax dodging, promote fair trade and tackle climate change.

This progress, however, should not obscure the fact that since 2007 most UNISON members will have seen the real value of their wages decline by anything from 11- 16% depending on sector. The workforce in public services is still being made to pay for an economic situation they did not create. The recent IPPR report 'Scotland's Missing Pay Growth' makes the case for pursuing greater prosperity via a policy of wage led growth, including in our public services.

We need an extension of sector wide collective bargaining – starting with the social care sector, where the vast bulk of the funding, comes from the public purse. This gives government enormous influence – it should be brought to bear to create sector wide standards of wages and conditions and adoption of the standards contained in UNISON's Ethical Care Charter. Restricting the use of zero and nominal hour contracts across public services should be a key part of any approach to workforce policy and planning. Our opposition to compulsory redundancy remains absolute.

We welcome the reports of the Working Together Review and the Fair Working Convention. Now is the time for action; we need measures on pushing forward the Living Wage, concrete proposals on extending workplace democracy and action which will deliver greater workplace equality. We need a joined up vision for the public sector workforce. A National Workforce Strategy could for example prevent needlessly wasted effort reinventing the wheel on issues like staff transfer, pensions, secondment and common procedures. A staff governance framework across the public services that engages staff at all levels is an urgent priority.

A major threat to the model of industrial relations in Scotland is the Conservative Government's (Anti) Trade Union Bill. UNISON is completely opposed to this Bill which is an attack on workers' right to organise and their civil Liberties. The Scottish Parliament should pass a Legislative Consent Motion on the Bill in order that the devolved aspects of the Bill in Scotland can be challenged. The Scottish Government should commit itself to refusing to implement those elements of the Bill which fall within its administration.



## ... And a **Better Scotland**

If we are to create a better Scotland for everyone who lives here, it will have to be a more equal Scotland, a more open Scotland and a more environmentally sustainable Scotland.

Scotland is an unequal society and we would urge that the Parliament uses every lever at its disposal to tackle this. High levels of spending on comprehensive public services are in themselves a redistributive measure.

As well as ensuring that our public services are funded properly, we should also be working to make them more responsive and accountable. Government should explore and promote user involvement in service design and delivery. One method of improving accountability is extending the scope of Freedom of Information legislation, to include all those who are awarded public contracts.

One of the more obvious ways inequality scars our society is the current housing crisis. Scotland urgently needs a programme which will improve the availability and the quality of social housing, tackling fuel poverty and strengthening tenants' rights in the private rented sector. UNISON Scotland has outlined how this can be done in our paper Funding and Building the Homes Scotland Needs.

We must ensure that the targets set in the Climate Change Act are met. UNISON has long supported the principles of a 'Just Transition' to a lower carbon economy and worked to promote this ethos through public services. We support the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland manifesto including their demands for a Warm Homes Act, action to tackle climate change through Infrastructure investment decisions and a more sustainable transport network. We need more support for Green Workplace initiatives.

## Our Public Services

This document has largely focussed on the principles which underlie and the problems which face public services in general. In the run up to the Holyrood elections UNISON Scotland will be publishing a series of 'manifestos' on our key campaigns.

### Health

The key challenge is the need to tackle Health Inequalities. This is a reflection of an unequal society and the solutions require policy action across our public services – not just in NHS Scotland. Care Integration must be used as a mechanism to deliver better care, rather than simply cheaper care.

“Rush rush rush, I think they forget we are dealing with human beings, old ones at that.”  
*Home carer*

Staff Governance and Partnership has worked well in NHS Scotland and it is essential that, should it pass, the Trade Union Bill is not allowed to undermine this. Direct funding rather than PPP should be the mechanism for investment in the NHS, and the Scottish Government should be looking to buy out PPP schemes wherever it is practical to do so.

Service user and staff involvement in service design should be strengthened – particularly at times of change or the development of new services. Political scrutiny is an important aspect of any public service, but the NHS does at times resemble a political football. Such 'scrapping' rarely adds much to improving the service.



### Local Government

Local government services have borne the brunt of austerity and this must stop. We welcome an end to the Council Tax Freeze that left us with a regime overly reliant on charges and undermined local democracy and accountability. Reform of local taxation is long overdue and UNISON supports a progressive property tax for the funding of local services. Councils should raise more of their own funding and have control over business rates.

“Morale is low because workload is very very high. Too much work - not enough people”  
*IT staff*

As set out in our 'Combating Austerity' report, the Scottish Government should support councils to buy back PPP projects, refinance borrowing and make better use of pension funds.

### Utilities

Scotland is best served by a publicly owned and run water service and we oppose the gradual privatisation through the use of contractors, PPP schemes and non-domestic competition. We can realise the vision of Hydro Nation if we are bolder in developing the tremendous natural resource that a public water service gives Scotland.

UNISON supports a balanced energy policy which includes a range of different sources of power. We also need to reform an energy market which has clearly failed, and explore ways to promote public and community ownership in energy generation and supply. There needs to be a renewed focus on fuel poverty as the statutory target to eliminate it this year won't be met.

## Education

Education is delivered by a team of staff – all of whom contribute to better educational outcomes. Cutting support for learning or administration simply places additional burdens on other staff. Schools should remain under local democratic control.

Pre school - UNISON welcomes expansions in entitlement to pre-school care, but resources must be present for this to be delivered in a sustainable manner which will ensure quality and accessibility.

Further Education- Thousands of courses have been cut and staffing levels in colleges have been slashed. This has particularly disadvantaged adult returners to learning, as courses of particular relevance to them have been targeted. There has been a welcome return to national pay bargaining in Further Education and this needs to be developed.

Higher Education – UNISON welcomes the strengthening of university governance. We also support free tuition, while recognising that more needs to be done to widen access to university places.

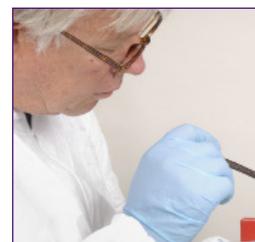
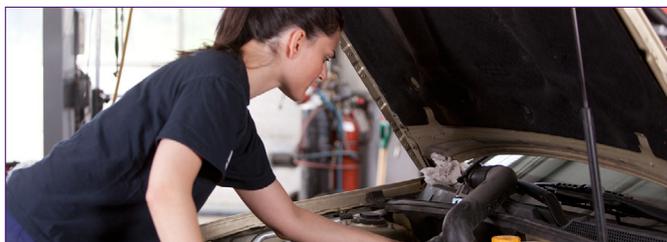


## Third Sector

The community and voluntary sector has too often been viewed as a cheap alternative to health and local government. Properly funded procurement policies should be used to deliver the Scottish Living Wage and raise employment standards. The abuse of limited hours contracts must be tackled and those commissioning services should use their influence to promote the Ethical Care Charter and in tackling poor health and safety in the sector.

## Police Scotland

Police Staff have been paying the price of the Scottish Government's cosmetic political pledge on police numbers. Substituting police officers for civilian staff at twice the cost does not meet the statutory duty of Best Value. The Chief Constable and SPA should be able to adopt a balanced workforce without political interference. The HMICS report into call handling should be implemented in full. A proper oversight structure for Police Scotland with real local input into policing priorities should be instituted. The board of SPA should have a member with specific responsibilities to examine staffing issues and concerns.



For further information contact

UNISON Scotland's Bargaining and Campaigns team on 0141 342 2811

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