

Government Programme

The Scottish Government has published its programme. This is the final session of this parliament before next year's election. The new bills of most interest to UNISON members include:

Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm Bill. Creates a new statutory domestic abuse aggravator and a new offence of sharing private intimate material. It will also enhance protections for victims of harassment.

Budget Bill. The spending review will be truncated this year as the Scottish Government awaits the UK autumn statement.

Burial and Cremation Bill. This will implement the Bonomy Commission recommendations on the cremation of infants and children with new regulation and inspection arrangements for crematoria, burial authorities and the funeral industry.

Lobbying Bill. Aims to improve public awareness of lobbying activity and will introduce a register of lobbying activity.

Private Tenancies Bill. Introduces a Scottish Private Rented Tenancy and removes the 'no-fault' ground for repossession, meaning a landlord can no longer ask a tenant to leave simply because the fixed-term has ended. There will be some protection for tenants against excessive rent increases, including the ability to introduce local rent controls for rent pressure areas.

Not all government action requires legislation and the programme includes administrative action. A National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education is the Government's response to the education debate on attainment. The key proposal is a new system of national, standardised assessment of children in P1, P4, P7 and S3, covering literacy and numeracy. The childcare hours entitlement is to be increased to 1140 hours a year by 2020.



The challenges facing Police Scotland are to be addressed through a review of national and local police governance. In addition they will implement the recommendations of the HMICS review of call handling and statutory guidance on police stop and search.

There will be a new National Clinical Strategy for the NHS following the current national debate. Establishing an independent national officer to review the handling of whistle-blowing cases aims to strengthen the whistle-blowing arrangements for NHS Scotland staff. New investment is to be targeted on child and adolescent mental health services in response to recent concerns.

When further powers are devolved the Government will introduce a Social Security Bill to mitigate the impact of UK Government welfare cuts and abolish the bedroom tax. There is also a welcome commitment to abolish Employment Tribunal fees. While there is nothing specific on the Trade Union Bill, ministers have said that facility time and check off is the prerogative of Scottish Ministers. The Scottish Labour leader supported this view and urged the government to demand a Legislative Consent Motion on these aspects of the Bill.

Three things to do today:

- [Fight the Anti TU Bill](#)
- [Mitigate Government Cuts](#)
- [Ask a friend to join](#)

Anti-TU Bill

The Trade Union Bill is an unwarranted interference in devolved public services and will wreck the modern approach to industrial relations in Scotland.

The Bill, through minimum ballot thresholds and restrictive procedures, seriously curtails the possibility of legitimate strike action and even protest. It also attacks the ability of unions to represent their members and raise subscriptions from members. Unions are also to be burdened with more 'Red Tape' and be charged for it, from a government that claims to want to reduce regulation! Here is the very useful [TUC Briefing and activist](#) pack that sets out the provisions.

The UK Government's delegated powers memorandum says the Bill is reserved and therefore no Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) is required. There is no consideration of the interplay with very different Scots contract and criminal law. This is challengeable and we are campaigning to get the Scottish Government and Parliament to claim that there should be an LCM. This would create an opportunity for different approach in Scotland.

There is also scope for challenges under the Human Rights Act. Some of the proposals are so extreme that they may not be regarded as 'proportionate', the key ECHR test.

We must take our arguments against the Bill to our members and the wider public.

Power to the People

Local energy production offers some exciting opportunities for local authorities to raise much needed finance, to improve the lives of citizens through lower energy costs and to meet climate change targets. The [IPPR's new report City Energy](#) lays out recommendations to encourage and support UK authorities down this road.

Britain's energy crisis

- Low income consumers are being overcharged
- Crisis of trust in energy companies
- Green finance gap
- UK economy is not benefiting from low-carbon subsidies
- Local energy generation is being held back

Local authorities are well placed to make a substantial impact on the above challenges through producing and selling electricity to their citizens. Munich has a target to supply the whole municipality of one million people with renewable electricity by 2025 and has invested €900m in renewable projects.

“Local authorities could keep their own and their citizen's energy bills low, reduce carbon emissions and ensure energy security”

Energy production offers a much needed source of finance for local authorities in the long term. Some of Britain's cities are already have an innovative role in our energy market and local authority pension funds are investing in low carbon projects: Lancashire's County Pension Fund has committed £200m to low carbon projects. Aberdeen is planning to use hydrogen as a vehicle fuel source which is produced by excess power from off-shore wind farms.

Business model options for cities:

Fully licensed supplier: city authority sets up and delivers electricity Nottingham is pursuing this option
 Joint venture: city authority works with third parties to set up and run an independent supplier



Licence-lite: city authority becomes junior supplier taking responsibility for some aspects of supply and licensing while senior supplier deals with the rest. GLA going down this road

Partnership: city authority works with existing supplier

White label: city authority licences use of its brand to existing supplier who markets to customers in that area.

Local authorities could keep their own and their citizen's energy bills low, reduce carbon emissions and ensure energy security. There is huge potential for creating and maintaining highly skilled jobs which boost the local economies.

Engaging in the energy supply and targeting low income households with improved tariffs local authorities could make a huge leap in reducing fuel poverty. Key Recommendations:

- Cities should consider engaging in the energy supply market where this promotes local generation and tackling energy affordability
 - Cities should explore opportunities for investing in low carbon energy developments through municipal bonds, local authority pension funds and the Green Investment Bank
- The report also calls for central government to:
- Set up a local authority energy unit
 - Encourage all pension funds to adopt the Principles for Responsible Investment
 - Design fiscal rules to ensure capital debt from local authority bonds or green municipal bonds do not count against targets for cutting debt
 - Give immediate borrowing powers to Green Investment Bank

Many authorities are already working on plans to deliver substantial benefits to the communities they serve. More should get on board.

Robin Hood Energy

One of the councils leading the way on energy is Nottingham: they have launched their own energy company: [Robin Hood Energy](#) offering 3 tariffs to city residents and claims that residents will be able to save up to £200 per year by switching to the city company.



The council is acting as an “administrator buying electricity straight from the grid and selling it direct to residents. The company is “not-for-profit”. Directors receive no salary and there are no employee bonuses.

In Scotland, Perth and Kinross council has received funding from the Local Energy Fund to conduct a feasibility study into setting up a district heating network. The project could provide heating for council buildings and local residences near the Tay.

[District heating](#) involves a closed network of pipes delivering hot water or steam to provide heating. Often it involves heating the water through capturing heat created as a by product for example the body heat created in train and underground stations.

The Perth and Kinross plan involves water source heat pumps in the Tay which generate energy for the district heating network. Natural gas boilers would provide top up heating when demand peaks.

Before they can move ahead with the project the authority need to establish that the pumps would impact adversely on wildlife in the area.

The IPPR report has lots more information work being done by local authorities on energy production

Defend FOI

Freedom of Information rights need to be defended at UK and Scottish levels. The Campaign for Freedom of Information in Scotland is urging supporters to tell the Scottish and UK governments how essential FOI is and to back the campaign's crowd-funding bid. The UK Government is attempting to undermine FOI, while in Scotland plans to extend legislation to cover some new bodies are feeble in the extreme.

Despite strong support for ensuring all bodies delivering public services are subject to FOI legislation, Scottish ministers are currently consulting only on including private prisons, providers of secure accommodation for children, grant-aided schools and independent special schools. UNISON supports CFoIS in condemning the decision not to also add others, including housing associations and private contractors providing public services.

Carol Ewart, CFoIS convenor, said: "It is hugely disappointing that, after all the previous consultations, the strength of public opinion, and pressure by CFoIS, public groups and even the Scottish Information Commissioner, the Government has come forward with such feeble proposals.

"Once again, public pressure needs to be brought to bear, to demand that the Scottish Government reverses the erosion of FOI rights in Scotland."

The UK Government has set up an 'independent' Commission to look at FOI, but its membership includes known opponents of increased public scrutiny. And there are proposals to charge £100 for appeals to the First-tier Tribunal against an Information Commissioner decision, with an oral hearing costing an extra £500. Appeals are currently free. Introducing fees for Employment Tribunal appeals, for example against unfair dismissal, has led to a massive fall in the numbers of cases. UNISON encourages members and branches to



A Real Plan to Fight Inequality

Anthony Atkinson's book: [Inequality](#) was high up on this year's summer reading list for policy geeks with very good reason. It shows us what can be done. Often books by academics are great on detail and analysis with lots of graphs and tables. They are too technical to gain widespread readership and often leave you in despair feeling that nothing can change. This book is very different: understandable for the non-economist but still full of detail and information and with a clear programme for change

Progressive tax rates with a top rate of 65%

The book is full of references to the importance of trade unions and highlights our crucial historical role in redressing the imbalance of power. Atkinson's programme calls for changes to trade union laws to ensure unions can continue to do this. Maybe that's why the government is so keen to reduce our effectiveness with the opposite: even more restrictive anti-trade union laws. The book promotes a wider role for trade unions in the development and implementation of public policy.

Among his ideas for reducing inequality through the tax system, as UNISON has long argued, is a progressive property tax.

Key Proposals from his 15 point programme include

Proposal 2: Public policy should aim at a proper balance of power among stakeholders...establish, where it does not already exist, a Social and

Economic Council involving the social partners and other nongovernmental bodies.

Proposal 3: The government should adopt an explicit target for preventing and reducing unemployment and underpin this ambition by offering guaranteed public employment at the minimum wage to those who seek it.

Proposal 4: There should be a national pay policy, consisting of two elements: a statutory minimum wage set at a living wage, and a code of practice for pay above the minimum.

Proposal 5: The government should offer via national savings bonds a guaranteed positive real rate of interest on savings, with a maximum holding per person.

Proposal 8: We should return to a more progressive rate structure for the personal income tax, with marginal rates of tax increasing by ranges of taxable income, up to a top rate of 65 per cent, accompanied by a broadening of the tax base.

Proposal 10: Receipts of inheritance and gifts inter vivos should be taxed under a progressive lifetime capital receipts tax.

Proposal 12: Child Benefit should be paid for all children at a substantial rate and should be taxed as income.

Proposal 14 (alternative to 13): There should be a renewal of social insurance, raising the level of benefits and extending their coverage.

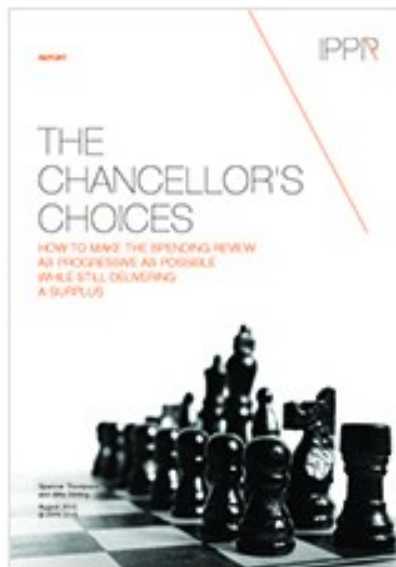
It really great to see a detailed programme to reduce inequality particularly one that recognises the both the previous successes of unions and that we are central to delivering more change. All we need to do now is ORGANISE....

The Chancellor's Choices

The IPPR has laid out some options to "make the spending review as progressive as possible while still delivering a surplus" in a report entitled [The Chancellor's Choices](#). The government is committed to reaching "a target for a surplus on public sector net borrowing by the end of 2019-20 and a target for public sector debt as a percentage of GDP to be falling each year". Like UNISON, the IPPR do not agree that the current pace of public spending cuts is the right response to current economic, fiscal or demographic challenges Britain faces. The report attempts to move beyond only saying that austerity is wrong and lays out a progressive (or perhaps less regressive) route to meeting those targets.

Key Principles

Support employment and productivity
 Prioritise preventative spending
 Integrate services
 Devolve powers and budgets



Policy proposals

- **Childcare:** On top of the increase to 30 free hours of childcare for 38 weeks an additional 15 hours of holiday childcare for 10 weeks of the year targeted at 2-4 year olds whose families are in the poorest 40%
- **Youth guarantee:** the government should guarantee a 6 month long job to all under 25s the at minimum wage for those claiming JSA for longer than 9 month
- **Troubled lives programme:** a programme to join-up services for people who face multiple challenges building on the troubled families programme through a £100million fund to give bonuses to local authorities who achieve targets set for supporting excluded adults
- **Invest in social house building:** triple the budget of Homes and Communities Agency to be used to build 50,000 social rented homes per year
- **Transport investment:** finance the One North package of integrated road and rail capacity

UNISON and others continue to campaign against the need for austerity we have also produced a [new pack](#) with ways to mitigate the impact of the cuts on public services and the people who use them. This report is a useful addition.

Not Quite "Prime" Care

As Health and Social Care partnerships start their work, the delivery of outsourced social care remains a real problem. Integration in Scotland started on 1 April 2015, with the new Health and Social Care Partnerships taking on responsibility for planning and delivering joined-up and seamless health and social care provision for adults, and also, in some areas, children's services. Integration Schemes from each Health Board and Local Authority have been submitted and three Health and Social Care Partnerships in East, North and South Ayrshire were the first to become fully functioning under the new legislation. One of the big challenges for the new arrangements is ensuring that there is sufficient high quality social care available. Reports from our members in many local authorities indicate that outsourced care providers are struggling to staff the service. Social workers are spending at lot of time ringing around providers to get them to deliver care packages.

Being commercial organisations we don't often hear about the internal problems they are facing. However, we got a glimpse today in a report in The Herald of an Employment Tribunal claim in which a manager was awarded over £60,000 for unfair dismissal and discrimination: The manager, despite being told her role would be office-based, had to carry out care visits to clients before and after her regular shift because the company Primecare was short-staffed and there was no-one else to do it. The staffing issue became such a big problem a number of complaints were made about Primecare because carers visited late or not at all. Hardly surprising if company policy is to take the money for packages knowing that they can't staff them. The Primecare website says they are, "developing a workforce which provides care and support with skill, compassion and imagination". Commissioners might need to look past the spin

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 0141 342 2819 k.sillars@unison.co.uk



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