

Scotland in UNISON

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Despite victory care bill still not fit for purpose



Susan Galloway
Information Development Officer

A change of tack on its National Care Service plans was signalled by the Scottish Government on 12 July as it announced an agreement reached with COSLA and the NHS about the bill.

It follows negotiations with COSLA over the summer in an attempt to rescue the heavily criticised legislation.

UNISON has campaigned for the withdrawal of the bill, whose measures do nothing to resolve the care crisis but instead threaten the job security and pensions of thousands of local government staff.

The initial agreement with COSLA means that duties, staff and assets will remain with local councils.

Commenting on these developments UNISON Scotland head of local government Johanna Baxter said: "The announcement that social care staff will continue to be employed by local authorities, and councils will still be responsible for assets like buildings and the delivery of services, is welcome. But many issues remain unresolved by this statement alone.

While recognising this first step, there are still significant problems with the National Care Service Bill.

"A national care service must improve the working lives of social care workers if we are to ever improve social care. They need fair pay, decent working hours and proper training. And those employed by the third and private sector need collective sectoral bargaining to ensure they can keep the pressure on government and care providers to deliver this."

As part of its plans the government still intends to remove social work staff from local government collective bargaining arrangements and put these in the hands of a National Social Work Agency.

UNISON activists are encouraged to raise these issues at the National Care Service roadshow 'co-design' events being held over the summer National Care Service Events | Eventbrite

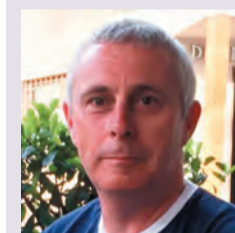
"The Scottish Government and COSLA must now get around the table with UNISON to discuss the detail of how this shared accountability arrangement will work including any new, or revised, legislation required to ensure we can build a world class social care service."

Photo by Danny Phillips

Activist enraged by Tory "PARTY"

Callum McColl, a critical care nurse and UNISON member working for the NHS in Dumfries and Galloway, was so angry at the release of the video showing the party antics taking place in Downing Street during lockdown that he wrote to the press and Daily Record published it.

Callum said: "The recent release of the Christmas party video filmed during lockdown in December 2020, which emanated from 10 Downing Street, filled me with rage. I watched the people involved, who weren't socially distanced or wearing masks, drinking, dancing,



singing and laughing in the workplace far removed from the measures that others were held to. I couldn't believe the blatant disregard for the rules and even the mocking of

them as if they were insignificant. It seems that the horrors of covid had affected me and continue to affect me more than I ever realised they had."

"I remember I was assigned my first covid positive patient who was chatting away to me on admission but sadly deteriorated and slipped away a few hours later, frightened and alone save for the PPE clad pair of eyes holding his hand."

Callum continued: "My experiences are in no way unique and will be familiar to a lot of NHS staff. Without getting into the politics of it there is a possibility that some of the people who appeared in the 'partygate' video may be honoured and we often hear that we should, 'just move on', or, 'get over it'. I saw honour in December 2020, I also saw dignity, respect, camaraderie and sacrifice but none of these qualities are apparent in the Downing Street video. I'm afraid I'm not ready to, 'just move on', or, 'get over it', not just yet anyway."

St Andrews golf course must withdraw 'fire and rehire' pensions threat

St Andrews Links Trust, which operates the country's world-famous golf course, is threatening to fire and rehire around 70 UNISON members over their pension rights.

The trust wants workers to agree to transfer from its local government pension scheme to a much more inferior one.

UNISON members have been told if they don't accept the new pension scheme, formal redundancy notices will be issued. St Andrews has made clear it intends to sack employees and re-hire them on new contracts and a much poorer pension.

Unless the trust scraps these proposals, UNISON says it will ballot workers for industrial action. The golf course can easily afford to keep its current pension scheme for staff. UNISON is warning that the threat

of losing their jobs is putting workers under pressure to sign their rights away.



Around 300 employees work for St Andrews Links Trust. Seventy-one staff are affected by these changes and have been threatened with fire and rehire. Any changes

to the local government pension scheme require the agreement of those in the scheme.

UNISON Scotland regional organiser Ian Fitzpatrick said: "The proposed pension changes at St Andrews Links Trust are completely unnecessary.

"The local government pension scheme is more than affordable for the trust that's behind one of the most successful golf courses in the world. St Andrews should be supporting its loyal staff through these difficult times, not issuing terrifying threats.

"No decent employer should be using fire and rehire scare tactics. This is nothing more than a weapon to force dedicated workers to vote to decrease their retirement income.

"St Andrew Links Trust board members must withdraw their vile threats and get around the table with UNISON to find a solution."

Moray in outstanding support for migrants

UNISON Moray activists recently attended a counter protest as part of Moray Trades Union Council (MTUC) to show support for migrants and refugees who have been located locally.

The branch report that 'the people of Moray came together in an outstanding show of solidarity to oust those attempting to spread hate and cause trouble in our wonderful community.'

Unions took part in a public meeting in Elgin Town Hall Elgin organised by Community Council was to share learning around asylum seekers and how local people or organisations can get involved.

Aberdeen NHS staff face increased parking costs

NHS staff at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary Major will lose access to 700 parking spaces if proposals to withdrawal of staff access to Lady Helen parking centre go ahead. Staff will be forced to use expensive offsite parking.

Grampian health branch recently surveyed staff, 85% of staff at the hospital are women, many have caring responsibilities and fear they will not be able to drop off their children at school and get to work on time, adding that they felt scared walking long distances to other parking in the winter and at night.

The changes would create a rat race to arrive early and grab any available parking, and create conflict with residents as health workers have to park in nearby streets. It could also affect the research facilities and embryonic businesses on site, which are part of the economic future of Aberdeen.

Nicole Murray communications officer said "There is already a staff shortage, and many staff say it may not be possible for them to continue working for NHS Grampian, or would work fewer shifts. After keeping us safe during covid, and facing huge welfare challenges, our health care staff deserve better.

"This would have a massive detrimental impact on hundreds if not thousands of staff. Many will face a huge financial impact. It is unavoidable that the welfare of patients would suffer as a consequence."

"UNISON is calling for a meaningful impact assessment, and actions in response to it, as NHS Grampian risk being in breach of its legal obligations if it goes ahead with these proposals in their current form."

Modern day slavery in private care homes

By Watty Gaffney

Lothian branch say they have discovered what amounts to 'modern day slavery practices' in local private care providers.

The companies hire migrant staff on contracts which bind them to their employer

for five years, giving their managers massive power over these individuals. The branch say that not only does the employer have the power to easily dismiss workers, but they effectively have the power to have them deported when they withdraw their company sponsorship.

UNISON organiser Derek Durkin said, "We know of at least four company's using these schemes – some more brutal than others – but for legal reasons, we can't name the companies involved, yet."

"One of these companies employs migrant staff and charges them £6,000 for migration expenses and other things, which they then deduct from their salary. If they leave, or are dismissed during their contract, then they must pay the balance in full."

"In one case, the company seized the full salary a UNISON member, after dismissing her on trumped up charges the week before Christmas leaving her penniless.

Fortunately, as a UNISON member and we were able to fully support her financially and assist her to find alternative employment. We believe this is modern day slavery and we will oppose it with every fibre of our being"

Pride in our union



By Watty Gaffney

UNISON Scotland LGBT + Convenor

Your regional LGBT+ committee and local branches have been attending Pride events across Scotland.

We have had great media and social media publicity, with advertising in Pride brochures and websites for little to no cost.

This is an excellent promotion of UNISON. It is abundantly clear that Pride is most definitely a political recruitment and

advertising tool. After all, Pride is a protest!

Shetland, Fife, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, and several others have already been incredibly successful. Our mailing list continues to grow, and we have gained new members from events. We also engaged the new minister for equalities and look forward to working closely in the coming year.



We are delighted with the local branch work to organise and support local events this year, and we must continue to do so, working with local branches discussing how they can support Pride

Industrial action looms following COSLA's outrageous behaviour

By Danny Phillips

Communications Officer

Despite the local government April pay review date and an overwhelming rejection of COSLA's only offer – in a consultative ballot – COSLA have failed to improve their pay offer and, crucially, has also refused to approach the Scottish government for additional funds to do so.

UNISON is running a 2-wave industrial strategy to put pressure on the employer to come back with a solution. In wave 1 waste members in Stirling and Perth and Kinross have already voted to take action during the UCI World Cycling Championships. Wave 2 ballot of members working in schools across Scotland closes on August 25th. If the school's ballot is successful industrial action could cause mass disruption across Scotland.

During the impasse on pay COSLA and the Scottish Government published a 'new deal for local government' - the Verity House Agreement. Whilst UNISON Scotland's local government committee cautiously welcomed this they said

if COSLA and the Scottish government are to achieve any of their shared priorities their warm words must be matched by action. After a decade of under-funding, our public services and the workers who deliver them need additional investment and, say UNISON, the agreement said little about that.

However there was outrage that on the same day this document was published COSLA leaders once again decided that they would make no improvement to pay offer to their own workforce, despite all three trade unions currently taking or balloting for industrial action. This decision came days after COSLA refused a request by the Joint Trade Unions to approach the Scottish government for more money to improve their pay offer.



Johanna Baxter, UNISON Scotland head of local government, said: "Our members are outraged that councillors would rather pick a fight with their own workforce and see us back in industrial dispute rather than stand up to the very government that is starving them of funds.

COSLA should be standing up for council services and the workers who deliver them, but I fear they have just demonstrated the limit of their effectiveness. We know that councils face difficult decisions due to the financial predicament the Scottish government have left them in – we just didn't think that standing up for their workforce would be one of them. Their decision not to approach the Scottish Government for additional funds to improve the pay offer exposes their inability to put party politics aside and do the right thing for the workers they are relying on to deliver their services."

Mark Ferguson, UNISON Scotland local government committee chair said: "The local government workforce require stability and adequate resourcing to deliver the services our communities need. Our members deserve a decent pay rise and employers who will stand up for them – it's clear that COSLA are not prepared to do either and as such we will have no option but to proceed with our plans to conduct a statutory ballot for industrial action. We will always continue to try to move negotiations on and avoid industrial action but COSLA's inaction leave us with no choice but to ballot for action."

FE goes to Holyrood

Danny Phillips

Communications Officer

UNISON Scotland's further education branch took their dispute to Holyrood on the final day before the parliamentary recess.

The branch is calling on the Scottish minister in charge of colleges, Graeme Dey, to intervene to prevent a crisis in Scotland's colleges.

Earlier this year, and reported in Scotland in UNISON, college support staff voted for strike action over a failure to agree on pay and the national harmonisation of terms and conditions. As it stands students will start the new academic year with the prospect of strikes.



Branch activists made their point dressed in full holiday gear shouting "Graeme Dey don't go on holiday!" as MSPs came out to sign large post cards at their demo outside the parliament.



The further education branch is demanding that college support staff get a fair pay rise and there should be no compulsory redundancies, in line with rest of the public sector. The union is also calling for ring fenced funds for courses and services, and thorough review of finances and governance in Scotland's colleges – to protect students and staff.

UNISON Scotland further education branch secretary Chris Greenshields said: "College support staff voted overwhelmingly to take

events financially and by setting up an organising group across sectors branches in their area.

By getting stewards and interested members together these local groups can agree budgets, sponsorship and or provision of promotional materials, as well as order leaflets and flyers in advance of the Pride events. This takes a huge pressure off the regional committee who often travel great distances to attend events and have now 35 regional events to cover in Scotland.

As a committee we can assist by sending a printed organising strategy, making planning for Pride events as successful as possible.

We can also help to setup your local organising committee with your local and area organisers who can take guidance from our equalities regional organiser Susan Burns, and LGBT+ equality lead Susan Kennedy. The more branches that do this, the more events we can cover, and remember that Pride events are an excellent recruitment opportunity for your branches.

To get more assistance contact w.gaffney@unionsglasgowclyde.com

Colleges need to be held fully accountable for their public spending. This really is a final chance for the employers and government to see sense."

Colleges where UNISON has a mandate to take strike action are: Ayrshire, Borders, City of Glasgow, Dumfries & Galloway, Dundee & Angus, Edinburgh, Fife, Forth Valley, Glasgow Clyde, Glasgow Kelvin, New College Lanarkshire, Newbattle Abbey, North East Scotland, South Lanarkshire, University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) Argyll, UHI Inverness, UHI Moray, UHI North Highland, UHI Outer Hebrides, UHI Perth, UHI West Highland, West College Scotland, and West Lothian College.



UNISON celebrates NHS 75th Birthday and Matt McLaughlin takes a look at its future

NHS at 75 years old, five key issues:

By Matt McLaughlin
Head of Health

As our NHS turns 75 the new First Minister wants a 'national conversation,' about its future.

I'm sure he'll forgive those of us working in the NHS when we respond with a quote from that well known philosopher Elvis Presley. What we need is "a little less conversation – a little more action."

You won't find many folk inside the NHS that will say we aren't facing a crisis and in need of reforms. Plenty people outside agree too. The Scottish Government's own 'household survey' recently recorded that satisfaction amongst adults in our NHS was at 78%. Not bad, but the same survey in 2011 recorded a satisfaction level of 88%.



Stop banking on it

At present around 14.5% of Scotland's working population, work in health or social care.

Our politicians tell us that there are more folk working in the NHS than ever before. Yet we have significant challenges in recruiting and training enough health and social care professionals to meet our health care expectations.

The NHS spent more than £500m on bank and agency clinical staff last year and the official. That's very far from being whole story. The Scottish Government's Workforce Report doesn't record bank, agency and additional work hours spend for other jobs, like Portering, Catering and Diagnostic

services. Survey after survey identifies short staffing as a major pressure on service delivery and staff wellbeing. At the same time as the Government's own workforce statistics are showing unfilled vacancies are on the rise.

This needs both immediate and then sustained action. In the short term more needs to be done to reduce agency spend and make more effective use of the existing cohort of staff. Longer term the NHS needs effective workforce planning, not just more doctors and nurses. We need resource investment in training and retention of staff in workplaces that are safe and facilitate working into later life. A big change from chewing workers up and then spitting them out which is what too many NHS staff think is happening now.

Not so much a National Care Service as a Trojan Horse

Despite what the Scottish Government seem to think, health care and Social care are not the same thing.

They don't though exist in entirely different worlds as anyone who looks at the interaction between hospital discharge and care plans is aware. Social care has massive problems in recruiting and retaining staff. This should surprise no one. How can it be right that the most vulnerable in our society are cared for by the worst paid and most precariously employed?



Unfortunately, the Scottish Government's National Care Service (Scotland) Bill won't address any of the real issues. Going well beyond residential or even care at home – ministers want

a system responsible for "social care, social work and community health". This will involve taking responsibility for a raft of services out of the NHS to be administered by new care boards in a "vibrant and stable" market. It has been roundly condemned by just about everyone who has been asked an opinion. This is Trojan Horse legislation that will see outsourcing of services and workers in key areas such as District Nursing, Mental Health, Addictions and Public Health outsourced if their health Board fails to win contracts – and there is a section of the bill that allows excluding them from even bidding! None of this is acceptable.



There's more to health than the NHS

It isn't just about dealing with the chronic staff shortages and better wages, although we need both of these things.

Even with more people working smarter, the NHS is at risk. Scots are still struggling to shake off our label as the sick man (and woman), of Europe. More Scots are living longer, but generally we are doing so in poor health, which itself puts demands on the NHS. Poverty is on the increase in Scotland. As sure as the sun rises in the East with poverty comes health inequality and with health inequality comes poor health outcomes.

Scotland's government, and Parliament, need to get serious about Public Health. They need to play their part in keeping people healthy. So that the NHS can play its part when they're not."

Photos by Louise Noble

Someone other than a Doctor will see you now...

We obviously need doctors in our hospitals and GP's in our communities but we need to explore the most effective ways of delivering services.

The pandemic has taught us that for some conditions a video or phone call consultation works just as efficiently as a trip to the surgery. Why does one need to be the Doc that we speak to? Many of our health needs could be resolved by the Nurse Practitioner, Physio, Dietician or even the local chemist. If medics are already using AI to assist with more accurate diagnosis, why can't other health care professionals?



Thoroughly modern medicine

We have heard a lot about 'innovation' in recent years.

In truth the NHS and our politicians have been dancing around the edges of 'modern medicine' for decades. There has been some progress, but some initiatives come at eye watering cost. The 'Da Vinci', a robot system which can perform a range of complex surgeries, comes in at £1.5m.

There is also room for more mundane robotics such as robotic pharmacy dispensers or automated portering systems which can be used to move heavy loads which can free up valuable people power to interact and provide direct patient care.



Green Week after hottest ever week

A new summary of UNISON climate policy highlights the importance of no new oil and gas and of support for green bargaining work.

It notes that climate change policy in public services is inextricably linked to policies on public health, the cost-of-living crisis, education and skills, and almost all other areas.

Sweltering heatwaves around much of the world in recent weeks were breaking all temperature records and are yet another deadly reminder that urgent climate action is needed. Raising awareness is one of the many reasons branches are taking part in Green UNISON Week from 15 to 22 September.

As Scotland in UNISON went to press, the hottest ever week had been recorded and climate scientists were warning about the Paris Agreement 1.5C global warming threshold



being passed this year or next. Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres,

said “climate change is out of control” and if the world continues to delay action to limit fossil fuel emissions, the situation will become “catastrophic”. It is estimated more than 61,000 people died in soaring temperatures in Europe last summer with fears of far more deaths in 2023.

See UNISON websites for details of local and national activities during Green UNISON Week.

The policy can be read at [UNISON-Policy-on-Climate-Change-and-Green-Issues.docx](#).

Renee retires after 50 years of service

By Louise Noble

UNISON South Ayrshire’s first and only branch secretary (until this year’s AGM) Renee Gillan has decided after over 50yrs of service to the trade union and local government that it’s time to step down from front line union activities.

The branch paid tribute for her relentless service and dedication not only to UNISON but the wider union movement with a dinner and presentation. Renee plans to travel when she retires.



Left to Right, Campbell Peden, Liz White, Renee Gillan John Kerr, Billy Cooper, Nan Killick.

Campbell Peden, branch health and safety and disabled members officer said: “Words alone cannot justify the dedication and support Renee has given over the years to members and fellow union colleagues. The skills, knowledge and expertise Renee has, cannot be lost to the movement”. Fellow colleague John Kerr retired members officer said: “After Renee’s travels I hoped she considers being part of UNISON’s retired members community”.

Black Workers campaign challenges everyday occurrence of racism in the workplace

By Danny Phillips

Communications Officer

Politicians, activists and academics backed UNISON’s Year of Black Workers to tackle racism and discrimination in the workplace, at the campaign’s official launch in Glasgow City Chambers.

UNISON Scotland Black workers committee launched its campaign with speakers from a range of backgrounds as they celebrated the committee’s work, outlined the challenges in tackling racism and discrimination in Scotland – and how we must improve the working conditions and opportunities for Black workers in Scotland.

Speakers at the event also outlined the challenges in tackling racism and discrimination in Scotland and said inequalities are “ingrained” in Scottish workplaces.

Workplace racism is an “everyday occurrence” experience for Black workers in Scotland. This is borne out by UNISON surveys. During the pandemic our Black members were more likely to experience discrimination linked to COVID safety, but less likely to seek union assistance.

Local Glasgow Labour councillor Soriya Siddique said: “I am delighted to have hosted the UNISON 2023 Year of the Black Worker at Glasgow City Chambers. There were many speakers and frank discussions on the barriers, inequalities and discrimination BAME



communities still experience. It was clear that BAME communities want urgent action from legislators and policy shapers. All levels of government must actively eradicate racism and Islamophobia in all of its forms from society.”



On the left Margaret Addo, on the right Harriet Campbell

The campaign aims to tackle the ethnicity pay gap, which shows the difference in the average pay between staff from ethnic minority

backgrounds in a workforce, compared to white staff. It also focuses on ending the current UK government’s hostile environment for migrants, including removing the international health surcharge.

Paul Reddish, CEO Volunteering Matter, spoke at the Glasgow event. He said: “It was a privilege to be asked to speak at the UNISON launch of the Year of the Black Worker. Critical to progress on racial equality is the role of allies in challenging ourselves and others, thereby by changing systems and institutions with ingrained inequalities.”

The event once again confirmed UNISON’s determination to bring lasting change. All of us must be actively anti-racist and embed an anti-racism approach within our Branches and the employers we engage with.

Glasgow health branch fight to prevent cuts to critical posts

By Watty Gaffney and Danny Phillips

Glasgow Integrated Joint Board are cutting 62 posts across community health services when members are struggling with understaffing and profound levels of unmet need in the city.

In an unprecedented move, the chair and vice-chair of the Glasgow City IJB have written to the Scottish government to express alarm at the impact these cuts will have. They say these cuts will mean services cannot be delivered to the level or quality they should be. And will generate worse pressures on the acute sector.

The branch has also written to Michael Matheson, cabinet secretary for NHS recovery, health and social care saying: “These cuts do not just mean a permanent reduction in staffing, but a reduction in services provided to the people of Glasgow.”

It adds: “Cuts to these services mean that the persistent, life-limiting health inequalities experienced by the population of Glasgow, in comparison to elsewhere in Scotland, will grow.”

The branch has also raised with NHS chief executive – ‘in strenuous terms’ – that the employer is ‘ploughing ahead with



implementation, despite no proper Partnership or Organisational Change process in place to consult on these proposals, in breach of normal industrial relations.”

Margaret McCarthy, UNISON NHS GGC & CVS Assistant Branch Secretary said, “We continue to visit workplaces speaking to frontline workers in addiction services, children’s mental health, and elderly care about the impact of proposed cuts. With staff

and services already at breaking point, further cuts will cause an untenable situation for the workforce and the communities they serve causing significant harm to patients in some of Glasgow’s most marginalised communities.”

If you are interested in providing testimony from the HSCP frontline, or getting active in UNISON around this campaign, please contact r.gilbert@unison.co.uk

We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories

Contact Louise Noble (Editor) louise.noble@unisonfifehealth.org

Danny Phillips d.phillips@unison.co.uk
Trisha Hamilton t.hamilton@unison.co.uk

Editorial Group
Louise Noble, Danny Phillips, Trisha Hamilton, Watty Gaffney, Jane Aitchison, Dianne O’Donnell, William Docherty