

Scotland in UNISON

Scottish council activists' bulletin Use these stories in your branch newsletter or circulate the pdf version to members

Further education branch fights dangerous compulsory redundancies in Glasgow



Scotland's largest college, City of Glasgow College has announced 100 (FTE) compulsory redundancies as a cost saving measure. A dispute has been lodged by UNISON.

This is a first in further education and follows a recent change in ministerial guidance for the sector.

Until now college staff had a no compulsory redundancies guarantee mirroring Public Sector Pay Policy elsewhere.

The change in Scottish government advice indicates that compulsory redundancies are a last resort measure.

Other colleges in the sector are watching developments in Glasgow – the need for a robust defence has never been more acute.

Disputes have also been lodged at Clyde College with others expected in Dundee and Angus College and Borders College around failure to consult on the need for job losses before launching severance schemes.

Further education branch secretary, Chris Greenshields said: "This is a dangerous first for the sector and raises significant alarm. Colleges are now interpreting this guidance as a green light to proceed with job cuts, with City of Glasgow College feeling emboldened enough to make this announcement before even properly consulting on the need for any job losses. Until now we have seen the use of voluntary severance packages to reduce staff numbers. The Scottish government owes our members under threat an explanation and a solution".

The branch is urging members, sector wide, to step forward as stewards to join the biggest fight to save jobs yet. Training, mentoring and support will be made available to anyone who wishes to help. The branch is very keen to hear from the wider union as to how our members' jobs can be defended from the most serious attack on jobs in this sector to date.



College workers vote for strike action following 'derisory' pay offer

By Danny Phillips

Communications Officer

Scotland's college staff have voted to take strike action, in a formal ballot, with 92% voting for action on a 62% turn out.

This ballot rejects a 2% pay offer and calls for action over the harmonisation of contracts and pay grades.

The union's further education branch say strike action will impact colleges right across Scotland.

The union says strikes will disrupt the next academic year, and will send a strong message that a substantially increased pay offer and that a national system of pay and grading (with equal pay for roles of similar weighting across the college sector) is urgently needed, to avert action.

UNISON Scotland further education branch chair Collette Bradley said: "College staff have had enough and have voted to strike with a massive mandate. If a national pay and grading structure is not agreed, UNISON members will now take action."

"Last September, after five years of working towards it, college employers revealed they would not support a nationally harmonised pay and grading system. They now want each college to set its own pay scales and grades.

"The Scottish government and Scottish Funding Council have put considerable money and resources into trying to harmonise jobs and pay. Employers have agreed to do this for lecturers, but not support staff. This has gone on for far too long".

National Care Service campaign goes to Holyrood

Susan Galloway

Information Development Officer

New Social Care Minister Maree Todd listened to UNISON's concerns for the workforce and for the future of local government when the union's National Care Service bill campaign took to Holyrood.

MSPs of all parties were invited to our lunchtime drop in event in the Scottish Parliament hosted by Katy Clarke MSP. Lilian Macer and Stephen Smellie, convenor and vice-convenor welcomed MSPs backed by an 'A team' of UNISON social care and social work activists keen to explain why the bill does nothing about the crisis in social care, is unfit for purpose and should be withdrawn.

The event was timely. In response to overwhelming criticism from the parliamentary committees scrutinising the bill, new First Minister Humza Yousaf took an early decision to pause the legislation, which he announced in his first statement to parliament on 18 April.

Over the summer the government intends to negotiate with COSLA and the STUC in the hope of finding consensus on the way forward. Humza Yousaf has said that social services staff remaining in local authority employment is a compromise he is willing to make.



"The event gave us an early opportunity to explain to the new Social Care Minister, Maree Todd, that this is not sufficient from UNISON's point of view," said Stephen Smellie, "UNISON remains opposed

to any removal of powers from local authorities. We also oppose the removal of social work and social care staff from local government bargaining arrangements, which still appears to be the government's intention. We support a National Care Service but not the one this bill creates. It keeps profit in care and will expand the market in social services."

Kate Ramsden retiral

Kate Ramsden has retired as Chair of the Communications and Campaigns Committee and will be sorely missed by all.

New Chair of the Committee Louise Noble said "It has been my pleasure to have known Kate for the time that I have and I am very grateful to her for her friendship and mentorship both within the Communication and Campaigns Committee and out of it. I have looked up to her as the Chair of the Committee and an activist and hope to continue the great work she has done. She may be retiring but she'll always be at the end of a phone when I need her help. Thank you Kate."



UNISON meeting with Katy Clark MSP, Mercedes Villalba MSP and Monica Lennon MSP

Disability Awareness Day

Margaret Gilmurray

Disabled Members Committee

Disability Awareness Day is on Sunday July 16 and it showcases what disabled people bring to the workplace and to the world of sports, arts and entertainment.

With UNISON among its sponsors, it is a day to bring to the forefront disability awareness.

The Day promotes a positive image of disability by challenging the myths and perceptions of disability, breaking the stigma of using aids and equipment and promoting inclusiveness.

UNISON Scotland disabled members committee is calling on members and branches to raise awareness of disability workplace issues, improve the experience of the disabled workers in your workplace and highlight the contribution and value that disabled workers make.

UNISON Scotland disabled members committee say there are three things you can do:

- Run an activity! Take inspiration from the activities planned in Warrington and run your own planned branch activity or encourage and work with your employer to run a workplace activity.
- Raise awareness! Use your social media to promote a positive image of disability and to highlight disability issues in your workplace and your successes.
- Educate! Speak to your branch education co-ordinator to sign up for the national online Disability Training course that's available for branch disability officers and disability contacts. The next scheduled course is 26th July 2023 - Disabled Members Branch Officers and Contacts Training. Use this knowledge to support your members and educate your employer.

Email Unionscotlanddisabledmembers@gmail.com if you would like the committee's six Myths Posters ("I am more than my disability"). The committee also offer disability training to branches on reasonable adjustments, disability passports and Access to Work. Get us along to your next Branch Development Day.

May Day rally

Ian Mullen

City of Edinburgh Branch

May Day saw UNISON activists turning out for a fantastic day with hundreds of trade union and campaign group members attending, the largest turn-out for many years.



Thousands of the residents and tourists lined Edinburgh's streets as we marched to the rally point at the Pleasance, where we heard inspiring speeches from prominent trade union officials.

It was a long day for many as the evening entertainment continued at the Leith Dockers Club, rounding off a fantastic event.

UNISON Scotland Communications Awards



The UNISON Scotland Communications Awards took place at the April Scottish Council recognising the remarkable communications work done by activists day in and day out.

The Scottish Disabled Members Committee scooped the Gold Best Long Running Campaign prize for the myriad of activity around the Year of Disabled Workers,



campaigning to address the barriers faced by disabled people getting into and staying in work. Of course, it doesn't end there. The Silver prize went to Dundee University Branch for a successful campaign that stopped the closure of the workers' pensions scheme and the Bronze prize to the Inverclyde Branch for long running old school campaigning,



The Young Members Committee

The Young Members Committee offers many opportunities to get involved within UNISON.

Hear from one of our longest standing members Andy Crosbie on his experiences within the Committee before he ages out.

"Back in 2015, when I was still a Modern Apprentice, I became the Young Members Officer for the SQA Branch of UNISON. Shortly after my election, I reached out to the full-time officer to find out about training and support and was immediately pointed onto the Young Members Committee. I attended the development weekend the next week and was made especially welcome being the newest and



getting their messages out online, in their magazines and on the football ground.

The Gold Best Short Running Campaign prize went to Aberdeen Universities pay campaign, which although ongoing, has been effectively getting its messages out with great press coverage and really high quality communications. The Silver prize went to South Lanarkshire for their campaign demanding better pay for home carers, and Bronze prize to Fife Health promoting benefits information sessions over I Heart UNISON Week 2023.

Best Online Presence prizes went to Fife Local Government Branch (Gold), Fife Health (Silver) and Inverclyde (Bronze), all well designed with well rounded, up-to-date online provision, and Fife Local Government offering an innovative freebie shopping experience.



Fife Health got the Special Recruitment Prize for their overarching recruitment strategy, taking the union's presence to all its sites.



Scottish Young Members earned the Chris Bartter Award for Creative Communications for their smashing Christmas cards wishing for social justice for all and a national minimum wage of £15.

The newly introduced John Stevenson Award for Mischievous and Marvellous Communications went to Dundee University Branch for humorous placards designed by the striking workers fighting for their pensions.

Well done everyone. Thanks again to our sponsors, TC Branding, LV= and Lighthouse Financial.

one of the youngest people to be involved in the group at the time as an 18 year old.

"Throughout my time in the committee, I have enjoyed networking and meeting young members from across Scotland- all the way from Orkney to Dumfries and Galloway and working on important campaigns such as "Gonnae No Dae That" on bullying and harassment of young members and 'How's Yer Heid?' on Mental Health. I have also attended the STUC Youth Conference each year and contributed to debate on these subjects along with other important issues affecting Scotland's young workers such as Modern Apprenticeships and Pay.

"In 2019, I completed my steward training within the branch. This has allowed me to take on representation of our members and I have supported to this date with helping several members of staff secure appropriate flexible working arrangements to help them maintain a work life balance. I have also been involved through this role with HR policy development.

"Although I will soon be ageing out, I am looking forward to continuing to be involved within UNISON both in my branch and as a member of the Scottish Disabled Members Committee".

Contact us on Scottishyoungmembers@unison.co.uk to get involved.

Scotland's overworked nurses in a 'catch-22'

A UNISON Scotland survey of over 1100 nursing staff has revealed the full impact of the NHS staffing crisis is not being recorded.

It shows that overworked staff either don't have the time to record the impact of understaffing – or have stopped doing so as it makes no difference.



Staff are meant to compile reports of understaffing on an NHS system called Datix, which is designed to record critical incidents and concerns. However the survey findings – based on more than 1100 responses from nurses across Scotland – show only 16% believe the Datix system is adequate. Many say they do not use the system, because they are in a catch-22 position where they are too overworked to take time out to record the extent of the overwork. Others say they have given up using the system as continual reports made no difference to the staffing position. Others report that managers frown on use of the system.

The key findings from the survey – which have been revealed on International Nurses' Day today (Friday) – show:

- 94% said they had experienced short-staffing on their wards
- 81% said short-staffing has a negative impact on patient care on a "regular or frequent" basis
- 83% said they did not believe the Datix system used in Scotland's NHS was an adequate tool for keeping track of staff shortages.

Wilma Brown, an NHS nurse and also chair of UNISON Scotland's health committee, said: "This survey makes clear that NHS staff don't have time to properly report the effect of chronic under-staffing across the NHS and the impact it is having on patients. It's vital that staff can report the true picture, so NHS leaders can make the changes needed.

"The situation on the ground is desperate, there are just too few nurses to be able to do the job properly and staff are struggling to provide patients with the care they deserve.

"Ministers are failing in their duty of care to both patients and staff and we need urgent action to provide a long-term solution to this crisis."

Matt McLaughlin, UNISON Scotland's head of health, said: "Sadly these results are no surprise. UNISON has been saying for years that the NHS incident reporting system is outdated and simply isn't working. It's impossible for the Scottish government to have a handle on the scale of the staffing crisis when so many incidents are going unreported.

"Employers and Government know that staff have neither time nor confidence in Datix and yet they continue to hide behind it. We need a system in place that records information in real-time and most importantly is responded to in real time. This should serve as a real wake-up call for the Chief Nursing Officer – we need less talk and more action."



Kirsty Cairns, UNISON activist, appeared on STV news

The UNISON survey shows the overwhelming majority (94%) of nurses in Scotland have experienced understaffing on their wards on either a daily (72%) or a weekly (22%) basis, with more than 80% saying this negatively impacts upon patients' care either frequently or regularly.

May Day celebrations for 400 workers transferred back to NHS

Danny Phillips

Communications Officer

Hospital workers celebrated their May Day transfer from private contractor SERCO to NHS Lanarkshire, says UNISON.

The move will place them on an equal footing with their NHS colleagues at University Hospital Wishaw.

The transfer, effective from today, international workers' day, comes after years of campaigning by UNISON to end private contractors providing NHS services.

Some 400 catering, cleaning, porter, patient laundry, switchboard and security jobs at Wishaw are switching with the Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) regulations safeguarding their terms and conditions.

NHS Lanarkshire reached an agreement with the private finance initiative provider Summit Healthcare Limited and the contractor SERCO Group PLC to transfer the 400 jobs in return for a compensation payment.

UNISON Scotland convenor and chair of the union's Lanarkshire Health branch Lilian Macer said: "It's great to see some 400 workers are transferring from private operator Serco to the employment of the local health board.

"It has taken years of hard work and campaigning to secure this result. It's a fortunate coincidence that the date of their



General Secretary Christina McAnea meets NHS staff who are being brought back in house.

transfer is May Day, a day of celebration for workers around the globe.

"But the fight goes on to win similar transfers for other health service workers still employed on private contracts at other hospitals in Lanarkshire and elsewhere. UNISON is still campaigning for staff on ISS contracts at University Hospital Hairmyres to be returned to the NHS where they belong."

UNISON Wishaw branch secretary Katrina Murray said: "This is great news for the workers, the hospital, the community, and the local economy. Many of the staff are part-time women on lower wages, who will benefit from a better deal at work, including improved pensions. The transfer also puts an end to a two-tier workforce. Now everyone will be treated the same".

Laura McDonald Retiral – Grampian Health Branch

Laura McDonald, Grampian Health Branch is retiring after a long career.

After joining the union in 1978 she took on several roles and became branch secretary and a prominent member on UNISON committees.

Within Laura's time she has taken on

numerous roles and has been a great mentor and wealth of knowledge to all stewards, officers and members.

The branch and the wider UNISON family feel it has been an honor and a privilege to work alongside Laura and she will be sorely missed as she retires.

Migrant worker network launched

The UNISON migrant worker network is an informal network of members from across the UK with a first-generation immigrant background including overseas and migrant workers, EU settled status workers, and workers who have naturalised as British citizens or who have indefinite leave to remain.

Members can now identify as and update their membership record as a migrant worker which will enable UNISON to target advice, support, and information more effectively.

Wendy Hudson, migrant worker lead said, "Migrant workers are working in every part of the public sector across the UK. Our public services depend on them and although they should be protected by UK employment laws, we know they are vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous employers and a hostile government. UNISON wants to bring migrant workers together to network and organise, and to get the support they need to fight exploitation."

UNISON members can also access free expert migrant rights advice and support for themselves

and their families. Call UNISON Direct on 0800 0857 857 to arrange an appointment.

Scan the QR Code to join the Migrant Workers Network.



Museum collections and community outreach to be hammered by budget cuts

The real impact of council budget cuts in Glasgow are beginning to emerge with around 300 jobs to be cut across all services, say UNISON activists.

The city's museums and collections, run by Glasgow Life, will see nearly a third of jobs cut. 37 posts from 128 will be slashed to save £1.5m. Jobs include curators, conservators, outreach assistants, digital photographers and technicians.

The union say these cuts will mean a loss of skills, knowledge and essential care of Glasgow's world-renowned museum collections and will impoverish the quality of museum experiences for the people of Glasgow.

Public programmes will be vastly reduced. The museum conservation department is being reduced by 40%. Glasgow museums and Mitchell Library staff who care for the collections and digitisation officers provide in-house photography of collections held within Glasgow city archives will be cut by 50%.

Christopher Robertson, UNISON Glasgow Life convenor, said: "We need politicians in this city who will stand up for Glasgow Life services, not pass on the funding attacks from the Scottish and UK Governments. Our museums need more investment, as do many other Glasgow Life venues and services, not less. We call on Glasgow city councillors to reverse these cuts to our museums and collections. The cuts risk a shift from a treasured, dynamic public service towards spaces of elite privilege."



Green Event in Orkney

Karen Spence

NHS Orkney

We held a 'GREEN' event on Friday 5th May in Orkney within NHS Orkney's polycrhub area.

The event was well attended and provided members and non-members with information on sustainable steps they can take both at work and at home. Those who attended the event were also given the opportunity to plant something in UNISON Orkney Health Branch's plot within the polycrhub and the branch are going to monitor their growth over time and provide photo updates on their Facebook page.



Included in this event was also a tree planting to commemorate the coronation of King Charles III. The Rowan tree was acquired and donated to NHS Orkney by the branch and was acknowledged by NHS Orkney's new Chief Executive, Laura Skaife-Knight.

Raza's hopes for Year of the Black Worker 2023

Scottish Black members' committee chair, Raza Sadiq gives his aspirations for the campaign.

Q: 2023 is Year of Black Worker, what are your hopes for this campaign?

"I hope we see a significant positive change in workplaces and greater recognition of the unique challenges faced by Black workers in Scotland, such as discrimination, prejudice, inequalities and racism. We need more Black workers in positions of leadership and authority, and for their voices to be heard and valued. I would also like to see a wider range of opportunities for Black workers, particularly in sectors where they are underrepresented."

Q: How do we fight racism in the workplace?

"We need to empower people to act. Persuade employers to make use of workplace procedures to address racism including clear reporting. We must hold employers accountable for addressing racism in the workplace and encourage inclusion of black workers at all levels. We must support branches to advocate for change and continuously improve to rip out racism wherever it shows its ugly head. The answer lies in education; policies, accountability; representation & inclusion; collaboration and continuous improvement".

Q: How do we encourage more black members to be active in their branch?

"Branches need to encourage Black members, be proactive with our interaction with them, invite them to meetings and get involved in campaigns. Black members must be given leadership opportunities and see themselves represented in decision-making structures of UNISON. Training and development,



mentoring and support are crucial. So is the celebration of Black members contributions, highlighting their achievements".

2023 YEAR OF BLACK WORKERS
Establishing legacy to generate change

Q: What work is the committee doing with branches to better support Black members?

"We are working with branches to raise awareness of the unique challenges faced by Black members. This includes targeted outreach efforts, such as email campaigns, phone calls, and personal invitations. And supporting Black members who are interested in leadership roles; and advocating for policies that promote equity and inclusion. We are also developing training and development opportunities for Black members, including leadership training, public speaking, and advocacy skills".

Q: What's your message to all the Scottish Black Members as the YOBW enters the second quarter of the year?

"My message is one of hope, determination, and solidarity. I encourage all Scottish Black Members to continue to be actively engaged in the campaign, raising awareness of the unique challenges faced by Black workers, together we can create a workplace that we'll be proud of."

Green UNISON Week

Fiona Montgomery

Information Development Officer

Christina McAnea has invited branches to organise activities to support Green UNISON Week in September.

The week will run UK-wide from Friday 15 to Friday 22 September inclusive.

Christina, UNISON General Secretary, said that branch workplace activity calling for urgent action on climate change has "never been more important."

She added: "The climate crisis could not be more pressing and is being felt across the globe.

"Green UNISON Week is our chance to focus on and highlight these issues – it is just one part of giving vital space to demand politicians take seriously the damage being done to our planet and to act to save its future.

"Public services are key to the governments pledges in this area so engaging with members and employers is vital and UNISON must play it's part in supporting our members in negotiating and challenging on this issue.

"We're encouraging branches to run a week of activities for members and most importantly to engage with employers on how they can reduce their own carbon footprints and ensure their employers have a plan to green their workplaces completely."

UNISON Scotland Green Network members are also making plans and new branch environment officers and all interested members can attend Green Network meetings.

Ideas for branch activity will be circulated and include using the excellent Climate Hazards and Resilience in the Workplace handbook and workbook in your branch.

North Lanarkshire early years workers willing to strike over massive cut in wages

Danny Phillips

Communications Officer

Early years workers overwhelmingly backed a formal strike ballot over fire-and-rehire proposals by North Lanarkshire Council that will leave them thousands of pounds worse off.



The council is proposing to make early years workers in higher level jobs (grade 9) redundant, then re-employ them on a lower wage rate (grade 7). That means full-time staff could see a pay cut of up to £6,500, says the union.

The decision to move to a ballot follows a consultation of staff, with 91%, saying they back strike action.

UNISON general secretary Christina McAnea, and UNISON Scotland convener Lilian Macer stood alongside affected workers, their families and children in their care - at a UNISON May Day protest outside Motherwell Civic.

A 5,000-signature petition demanding the council drops the fire-and-hire proposals, was presented to the council.

Union figures will meet representatives of the council to request the plans are

withdrawn. Preparations will now begin for a strike ballot over the coming weeks.

UNISON general secretary, Christina McAnea said: "It's unacceptable to slash pay in this way. UNISON is right behind the staff.

"North Lanarkshire Council must see sense and withdraw these plans so the workers can get back to doing the jobs they love – nurturing young children and preparing them for the school years ahead."

UNISON North Lanarkshire branch secretary Marie Quigley said: "Early years workers made it overwhelmingly clear they are willing to strike unless these plans are dropped. It's unacceptable to slash pay in this way.

"Demands on the workers are increasing because they're seeing more children with extra educational needs, as a result of being unable to socialise during the pandemic."

Chile commemorates overthrow of Allende government

During 2023, millions of Chileans within the country and across the world are organising a wide range of events to commemorate 50 years since the violent overthrow of the Allende government, which marked the start of a cruel and bloody dictatorship that lasted almost 17 years.

The Pinochet regime soon became a byword for repression, torture, murder, kidnapping and forced disappearance. Even for those of us who suffered oppression under the dictatorship, it took some time to understand why such terror was unleashed on a defenceless population. The main purpose was to introduce a brutal neo-liberal economic system which – with very limited reforms – persists five decades after.

The result was the extreme inequality prevalent in Chile until the present day, which sparked the social revolt of October 2019. As we reach this important milestone, Chile and its people still need the warm embrace of international solidarity, something UNISON can be very proud of being at the forefront of ever since its inception.

Here in Scotland, the small Chilean community that arrived as refugees in the 1970s is reaching out to the trades union movement and other civic, religious, political and cultural groups that mobilised in active solidarity with Chile in the struggle to restore democracy, to organise its own programme of events. Plans include public meetings in Glasgow and Edinburgh around the date, photography and posters exhibitions, social



and cultural events, as well as media and social media activity. Initial responses to the call to join in the commemorations, highlighting the strong solidarity links which although developed half a century ago are still very much alive today, have been overwhelmingly positive.

As always, UNISON leaders and members, spearheaded by the International Committee, are among the first to respond and for that we are eternally grateful.

We shall overcome!/Venceremos

We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories

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