

Scotland *in* UNISON

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Schools strikes will go ahead after revised offer too little too late

UNISON education members in 24 local authorities will take strike action in a dispute over pay. This targeted strike action by 21,000 UNISON members is on behalf of all local government workers.

As we went to print, strikes were planned for late September with a mandate to take action in three quarters of schools across the country – almost 2000 schools – in 24 local authorities.

UNISON Scotland's local government committee met to discuss the detail of a revised offer from COSLA. UNISON's local government committee agreed that strikes will continue, and they will consult local government members on COSLA's offer and recommend they reject it.

“We cannot agree to a pay offer that will result in further cuts to our member's jobs and the services they provide”

Johanna Baxter

UNISON say that COSLA's offer is too little, too late and remains a long way from what is needed. They say the vast majority of local government staff are being offered 5.5% which is only 0.5% more than COSLA's original offer, which was made almost 6 months ago and rejected by UNISON members.

UNISON also say that the commitment to pay the lowest paid workers £15 per hour is far too vague and that because no new money has

been found to fund the small improvements to the offer it will inevitably lead to more cuts to jobs and services.

UNISON Scotland's local government committee, which is made up of representatives from local government branches across Scotland, voted unanimously to continue with strikes and to recommend rejection to UNISON members in a consultative ballot.

UNISON report the committee are angry that for the second year running it had taken COSLA almost 6 months to put forward a revised offer, only doing so on the eve of school closures.

UNISON have written to COSLA to say:

- For members who earn above the Scottish Local Government Living Wage this offer differs from your original offer by only 0.5% in-year.
- The offer remains below the rate of inflation meaning that local government workers are again being asked to take a real-terms pay cut which they can ill-afford during a cost of living crisis.
- The commitment to deliver a minimum underpinning rate of pay of £15 per hour for the local government workforce remains vague and not within a timescale that we can agree.
- COSLA's own press release announcing this revised offer that “no new money has been identified for this offer”. When we spoke to you yesterday you made clear that in the absence of additional financial support from the Scottish Government any improvement to the offer would result in further cuts to our members jobs and the services they provide.

UNISON Scotland head of local government, Johanna Baxter said: “This revised offer is far too

little, too late. Strikes will therefore proceed next week. We cannot agree to a pay offer that will result in further cuts to our members jobs and the services they provide.

“local government workers are, once again, being asked to take a real-terms pay cut”

Mark Ferguson

It has taken COSLA 6 months to send us a revised pay offer which, for the vast majority of staff is an increase of only 0.5% in-year. These are not well-paid staff, they are on less than the Scottish average wage and it is simply not acceptable.

Far from learning the lessons of last year's dispute the situation has been worse this year, caused further delay local government workers' pay during a cost-of-living crisis and created uncertainty for parents. This is no way to conduct industrial relations.”

Chair of UNISON Scotland's local government committee, Mark Ferguson said: “The offer is still below the rate of inflation meaning that local government workers are, once again, being asked to take a real-terms pay cut which they can ill-afford during a cost of living crisis.

Our members have been left waiting for an improved pay offer for months after their pay uplift was due, and right up until the eve of mass school closures, whilst COSLA and the Scottish Government have prevaricated over who will find the additional money needed to fund any improved offer and where they money will come from.”

Lilian Macer appointed Scottish Secretary of UNISON

Lilian Macer was appointed Scottish Secretary of UNISON on August 1.

She was recruited to be UNISON's top official in Scotland from her job as the employee director for NHS Lanarkshire



which she had held since 2009, having previously worked in other NHS roles. Alongside her career in the NHS she has been UNISON's

Scotland convener for 13 years in a position which saw her lead many Scottish delegations to National Delegate Conference, Health Conference and Scottish Trade Union Council. Lilian succeeds Tracey Dalling as UNISON's Scottish Secretary and is only the second woman to hold the position.

UNISON

As people buckle under the seemingly never-ending cost of living crisis, struggling to make ends meet, UNISON members across Scotland are standing up and taking action against below inflation pay rises.

From local government workers (see page 1) to college and university support staff and many others, members are saying “no more” to pay rises that are in fact pay cuts. Here we give a round up of UNISON branches taking action across Scotland.

College strikes More than 2,000 support staff in 20 colleges across Scotland took well supported strike action on September 7 followed by localised action in colleges across the country on 14 and 15 Sept. As we went to print, further strikes were planned.

UNISON members, including librarians, IT specialists, technicians, administrative and business support staff, cleaners, canteen workers and estate management staff had voted overwhelmingly (93%) in April to strike.

UNISON further education branch secretary Chris Greenshields said: “Although college employers increased their offer from 2% to £3,500 flat rate payment over two years, this came with a real threat of compulsory redundancies of college support staff. Effectively members are being asked



Strikes in Scottish universities

Meanwhile, more than 1,000 support staff in universities across Scotland began strike action on 18 September.

UNISON members in four universities, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Glasgow, University of Dundee and Glasgow School of Art are taking action over a two-week period, as UNISON members escalate their demand for a fair wage rise after many years of below-inflation increases.

The union held a national strike day on September 20th with a midday rally at the Scottish Parliament, followed by rolling strike days across the four universities.

Earlier this year, members voted to reject a pay offer for 2023/24 – worth between 5% and 8%, an offer which did not come close to the pay claim.

UNISON chair of the Scottish Higher Education Committee, Davena Rankin said: “University staff are due a pay rise that is in line with inflation. The employer has imposed an early settlement on members without reaching agreement with the union. Our members are worth more.”

There have been ballots galore running this summer in the Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB's) which are arms length Scottish Government organisations.

UNISON branches within the NDPB sector have made it clear that they are not willing to accept real terms pay cuts. Like much of the public sector they are not being funded enough by the Scottish Government, and UNISON members continue to demand a decent pay rise.

Scottish Water members vote for action over pay

UNISON is moving to a formal industrial action ballot of Scottish Water members after the consultative ballot on the pay offer, which had just closed as we went to print, voted 82% in favour of moving to industrial action.

Emma Philips, Regional Organiser said: “The pay offer of 8% was tied to a new pay and grading structure that was not negotiated and will see those on lower pay potentially getting their salary reduced.”

Banksy backs campaign against museum cuts

Banksy's 'Death On A Dodgem' joined the party as Glasgow Museum workers protested on the steps of Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art on Saturday 5 August to condemn the £1.5 million cuts being made to their services.

The Grim Reaper blasted out the Bee Gee's Staying Alive and gave the protest an amazing boost, said UNISON Glasgow, Branch Secretary Brian Smith. “Glasgow, and Glasgow Museums are taking a hard hit this year, so Banksy's stunt is absolutely fitting given the circumstances.”

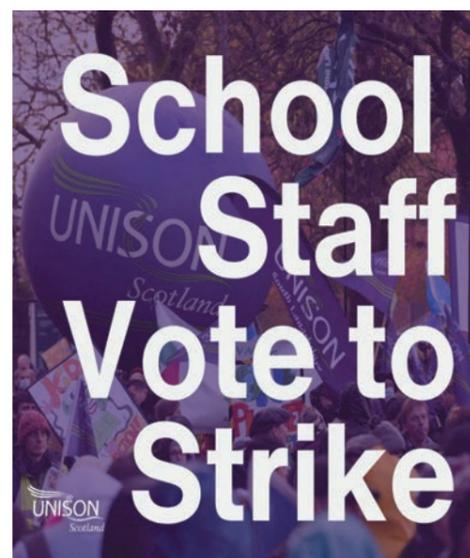


Protesters, including Technicians, Learning Coordinators, Archivists, Curators and Conservators affected by the cuts, were delighted to learn that along with the support of Glasgow's art and historical communities they also have world-famous artist Banksy on their side.

UNISON member Helen Hughes, a Textile Conservator, condemned the 30% cut of professional and specialist skilled staff, which will mean “less care, less research and less public access to Glasgow's internationally important civic collections and overall a lessened public offer by the museums.”

UNISON member Elaine Addison, a Curator at The Open Museum added, “There will be much less community engagement and learning/ education through the deletion of the Award Winning Open Museum. These services engage with the autistic community, those in the criminal justice system and those who are facing isolation – as well as many others. They will deeply miss these services once they are gone.”

Brian Smith warned “Glasgow Life, Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government need to get creative about protecting these amazing cultural assets to Glasgow. There needs to be much greater national funding to Glasgow for its Museum Services and the City generally. We hope local people will write to their councillors and MSP's and demand change.”



to pay for their own pay rise with their job, during a cost-of-living crisis.”

As well as a decent pay rise, UNISON is calling for the same guarantee that has been given to the rest of the public sector, that there will be no compulsory redundancies in colleges.

Pride success as bright new banners unveiled



By Watty Gaffney

UNISON has been proudly visible, supported by branches, at 23 Pride events across Scotland this year.

As part of an inclusive approach to recruitment and retention of members, vital in ensuring that UNISON is leading in LGBT+ equality campaigning, the LGBT+ committee has modernised its banners and flags with

a bold new design, to reach out to the most marginalised in our society.

Co-convenor of UNISON Scotland's LGBT+ Committee, Watty Gaffney said: “Working with communications officers at UNISON we have created a simple yet bold progressive message, ‘Be Yourself In UNISON.’”

“This resonates with young people and as has been clearly evidenced by several branches joining our stalls and parades, and has led to increased engagement and recruitment of members and activists at Pride events this year.”

Young people play vital role in LGBT+ community

Pointing out that young people play a vital role in pride events “by advocating for the LGBTQ+ community, celebrating diversity and inclusivity, and promoting social justice.”

Watty said: “Their participation and influence are critical for the success and impact of these events, and their voices are essential for bringing about change and progress.”

“By harnessing their energy, passion and creativity young people can help create a world where everyone is free to be who they are, love who they want and live a life of dignity and respect.”

“Pride events are the ideal opportunity for us to increase UNISON visibility and for branches and the wider union to directly promote their campaigns to young people and families in their area.”

“We need to engage those young people in our trade union movement and encourage their activism to help us shape the future of our equality work within UNISON and Pride events provide that opportunity.”

in Action

UNISON's Plan to Win for Social Care Workers

By Stephanie Martin

Local Organiser

UNISON's National Delegate Conference 2023 made a commitment to a renewed emphasis on member participation as part of our efforts to develop sectoral bargaining in Scotland's social care sector.

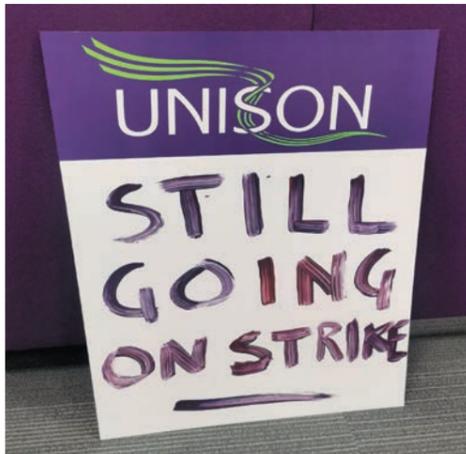
This commitment, supported by the recruitment of four new full-time organisers, using the Branch Support and Organising Fund, will carry out UNISON's Five Phase Plan to Win improved pay and conditions, as well as campaign for eventual insourcing across this sector.

We are currently in our research and campaign development phase of the organising strategy, building our understanding of the pressures on workers in the sector, as well as studying the various social care employers across the public, private and third sector.

The STUC have been clear on the inadequacies of the Scottish Government's National Care Service proposals, particularly around the perpetuation of private involvement in social care. The Profiting From Care report exposed the impact of for-profit business models on workers and service users as compared to not-for-profit and public provisions, finding that staffing resources are 20% worse in the private sector and staff are paid on average £1.60 more per hour in the public sector.

As a union with over one million female members, UNISON is already well-placed to increase the participation of lower paid women in workplace democracy, and our new organising drive into the social care sector where eight out of ten workers are women, will bolster this.

Michelle Brewster, Area Organiser, captures the ambition of the new team in achieving these objectives: "I am keen to organise in this sector and feel privileged to be a part of this new team. We all want to make a difference to those staff on the frontline in the Social Care Sector to see a real terms improvement in hourly rates of pay, working hours, conditions and to ensure that 'Fair Work First Guidance' becomes embedded in this sector. It will be a challenging project but one that we are certainly ready for."



She slammed Scottish Water for trying to bulldoze these proposals through. "Scottish Water needs to get around the table to get a decent cost of living pay rise into the pockets of the hard-working staff and then we can look at their options for restructuring."

UNISON Scottish Water branch secretary, Patricia McArthur added: "It is not acceptable to withhold a cost of living pay rise when workers are living through the highest inflation in generations."

SCRA members reject pay offer

Meanwhile, there was a 90% rejection of the latest pay offer from the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration (SCRA).

Emma explained: "Whilst the offer is 10.5% for some key roles, the lowest paid are being offered only 4.5%. The employer is now returning to the negotiation table."

Pay deals closed after threat of action Emma added: "Over the summer UNISON has finally closed off last year's pay for 22/23 with improved offers that our members votes to accept with Scottish Environment Protection Agency, the Care Inspectorate and Scottish Social Services Council.

"It took moving formally towards industrial action to secure improved offers after the initial offers were rejected," she said.

Ballot win forces backtrack

Finally in the NDPB branches, Scottish Canals were forced to backtrack after a 92% of members voted to go to industrial action when the employer failed to implement the

reduction of the working week from 37 to 35 hours that was part of last year's pay award.

Police Staff Scotland pay ballot Members in the Police Staff branch are being consulted on a new pay offer with a vote to reject.

Calling on members to vote against acceptance and for industrial action, new branch secretary David Malcolm said: "We deserve more. Please give our team a mandate to go back to the negotiating table and demand more. Together we can do this."



National Nursing Officer visit

By Stuart Tuckwood

UNISON National Nursing Officer

It was great to visit UNISON Fife Health Branch and to get the opportunity to speak to UNISON members and staff in Kirkcaldy and Dunfermline.

The new national treatment centre in Kirkcaldy was very impressive. It was great to hear how NHS staff and patients had been involved in the design and planning for the new buildings.



Nationally our nursing sector are prioritising campaigns and a push to force employers to take accountability for safe staffing levels. Our nursing family across the UK are completely sick of coping with unsafe staffing and action to address this is long overdue. Whilst the introduction of legislation in Scotland is welcome, our members need to be listened to and need to see action in their workplaces now. Unsafe staffing is unacceptable both for our patients and for our own wellbeing and we won't tolerate it anymore.

UNISON Scotland is engaging with government on the guidance and policy detail of the legislation and the union will be right behind our branches to help them lead the change to hold management to account.

I'd like to thank the members and UNISON nursing reps who welcomed me and talked me through the challenges of your roles. This autumn and winter our nursing sector is running a series of seminars on professional topics on which we want to hear your opinions, to influence our strategy and campaigns. Please sign up when you get the e-mails; by nursing in UNISON we can lead the change we need.

Housing & Care Scotland branch supports uniform banks for school age children

The branch has donated a total of £2,000 to Cash for Kids across the footprint where the branch covers members.



They have donated £500 each in Glasgow and Dumfries and a further £1,000 to support families in the Edinburgh and the Lothians via Bauer Media's Cash for Kids campaign. Branch Secretary Paul Stuart met with Michael Smith from Bauer Media who represents Cash for Kids across the region to hand over the donations. Paul Stuart, Branch Secretary says 'Branch have supported donations to Cash for Kids for a couple of years now as well as UNISON's own There For You and we know that these particular donations will go directly to the communities in which our members live and work supporting our most vulnerable people, who may well even benefit from this themselves'.

Aye Venceremos – celebrating international solidarity

By Kate Ramsden

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the US backed coup in Chile that saw the overthrow of the Popular Unity government led by democratically elected Salvador Allende – the other September 11th.

Fitting therefore, that in the lead up, UNISON retired member Colin Turbett launched his latest book, Aye Venceremos, which celebrates the history of Scots 1970s solidarity with Chile.

The event at Glasgow City Chambers, supported by Glasgow City UNISON, and hosted by Glasgow girl and councillor, Baillie Roza Salih, herself a Kurdish refugee, also commemorated 50 years since the coup. There were powerful contributions from UNISON depute convener Stephen Smellie, Adela Quinn, from a Chilean exile family and Ruben Romero, a Glasgow political exile, alongside beautiful music from Cecilia Prieto and Jorge Sandoval (duo from Patagonia Latin Sound – a band based in Edinburgh).



Adele and Ruben spoke movingly about their own experiences, both in Chile during the coup and since they came to Scotland. They thanked the people of Glasgow for the warmth of their welcome, and Scottish Chile Solidarity for their support.

Colin Turbett said: "The new book was written to retell the background to the coup fifty years ago, the stories of some of those who were exiled to Scotland, and the tremendous campaign of support for them and anti-fascist solidarity activity, including worker's action."

"It is important that stories are brought together and recorded – that way we can continue to build Scotland's tradition of

international solidarity – seen from such examples as the resistance of 'the Glasgow Girls' in 2005 and the mass blocking of a deportation in Kenmuir St. in 2021."

Stephen Smellie spoke of the importance of international solidarity, welcoming refugees and anti-fascism. He spoke proudly of the solidarity action by Rolls Royce workers in boycotting work on aircraft engines belonging to the Chilean Airforce, now immortalised in the film, Nae Pasaran, quoting Bob Fulton, the steward who initiated the boycott, "You've got to do what's right."

Aye Venceremos can be purchased at Calton Books

UNISON commemorates Paisley worker killed at Auschwitz

By Watty Gaffney

Activists from UNISON joined the family of the only woman from Scotland to have died in Auschwitz on a trip to the former concentration camp.

UNISON branches embarked on the study tour to raise awareness of the atrocities of the Holocaust and also to honour Jane Haining –



who worked in Paisley for 10 years of her life before dying at the hands of the Nazis.

Jane's family took part at a wreath-laying

ceremony at the tragic site in Poland where Adolf Hitler's forces murdered more than 1.1 million people between 1940 and 1945.

The tour was part of UNISON's work to educate members, activists and the wider community.

Mark Ferguson, branch secretary of UNISON Renfrewshire, said: "Observing first-hand the atrocities which took place instils a responsibility on us all to ensure future generations do not repeat these murderous acts."

"We are very honoured to have representatives of Jane Haining's family joining us and to help us to commemorate her selfless bravery."

UNISON General Secretary Christina McAnea who joined colleagues on the study



tour said, "Thanks to UNISON Scotland and Unison Cymru-Wales for organising a study tour to Auschwitz Birkenau."

"A privilege to join Mark Ferguson to lay a wreath. It is harrowing and hard to comprehend the sheer scale of suffering that happened here and so important to go beyond the numbers and to remember that every victim had a life that was cut short."

Year of Black Workers Survey Report

A survey undertaken by the Scottish Black Members committee shows a strong appetite amongst Black members for becoming more involved in UNISON.

Black members organising activity at branch level is the way to harness this and some branches are already taking strong proactive initiatives to recruit, engage and activate Black workers whom others can learn from.

It is also clear from the survey how keen branch activists are to improve their confidence in dealing with racism and race discrimination in the workplace. There is good awareness amongst activists of UNISON's Race Discrimination Protocol, however only 10% of those who are aware of it have ever referred a case under it.

Sadly, only 1 in 10 of UNISON's Black members know about any work the union is

doing with and for them and only 41% of Black members agreed that they have a voice in their branch, compared to 67% of UNISON branch activists who believe that this is the case.



The results demonstrate that there is some way to go to improve communication and visibility with our Black membership. Visibility is the greatest challenge for building

activism within UNISON and it's clear there's a real gap in perception between branch activists and Black members.

One of the most concerning findings from the survey showed that more than 40% of Black members had direct personal experiences of racism or race discrimination in the past 12 months, yet only 1 in 5 contacted their branch for help when this happened to them.

The main reasons given for this include the belief that there is nothing the union can do, and poor understanding of who to contact to get help from the branch. This demonstrates how important it is that every UNISON branch communicates loudly and clearly to Black members that racism and race discrimination are trade union matters and they must ensure that members know how to raise an issue and who to contact.

We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories

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