

Scotland *in* UNISON

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

ONLINE VERSION UPDATE

Glasgow women strike vote forces equal pay concessions

**UPDATED FROM
PRINTED VERSION**
DUE TO COUNCIL CONCESSION
JUST AFTER SiU PRINT TIME

Just after we went to press Glasgow City branch postponed strike action on 29/30 March following the council's last minute concession not to 'dump the deal' they had agreed on the 2019 arrangements to calculate further interim equal pay compensation payments.

The branch will go into a three-week period of intense negotiations to hammer out the devil in the detail. Planned strike action on 20 and 21 April remains in place.

The branch said: "This important concession has been won for one reason and one reason only - the willingness of trade union members to take strike action."

The strike decision had followed a ballot of around 9,000 workers, with 52.5% of members voting. A massive 96% of UNISON members backed strike action. With our sister trade union this could have seen over 12,000 workers out on strike.

This is larger than the historic equal pay strike in the city four years ago and would affect home care, cleaning, catering, schools, nurseries, residential homes, homelessness hostels, addiction services and admin functions across the council.

Kath Stirling, UNISON branch



"This important concession has been won for one reason and one reason only - the willingness of trade union members to take strike action."

Glasgow's own Rosie the Riveter rallies the members and UNISON general secretary Christina McAnea (third from left) joins strike leaders in Glasgow to support the ballot and join the phone banks.

chair, said: "The purpose of the strike action was to force the council to maintain the current arrangements for equal pay compensation payments.

"These were won after the last strike but the council was moving to tear up those arrangements. This could see smaller payments for some and others left out completely.

"There was no moral or political justification for such an approach. These are the same women, in the same jobs still being paid under the same discriminatory gender pay scheme.

"The women and their jobs haven't changed so why should the compensation arrangements?"

"We say no dumping of the 2019 deal. No exclusions."

In 2019, a £500m settlement was agreed with staff which settled pay claims up until March 2018 and included a new pay and grading system to rectify issues of unequal pay, primarily of women.

Since then, around 5,500 new claims have been lodged for the period prior to March 2018, with nearly 20,000 claimants

waiting on settlements for the period after that.

The current dispute centres around whether the new claimants receive the terms of the 2019 agreement, while the council said that it may not be able to finally settle its debt to these women until 2024, with no progress made on the issue of interim payments.

Kath warned: "We have been fighting for equal pay justice for years in the courts, workplaces and streets. We have fought previous council administrations and we have fought this one.

"We are not going away until the council meets its obligations to women in this city"

UNISON general secretary Christina McAnea, who came to Glasgow to support the ballot and will speak at a rally in support said: "Women in Glasgow City Council have had promise after promise on equal pay and this saga has been going on for decades.

"Making women wait for many more years is not acceptable.

"This is a debt owed to women in the city and must be paid."



UNISON Scotland welcomes Tracey as first female Scottish Secretary

I am delighted to have taken up post as UNISON Scotland's Scottish Secretary.

I feel incredibly privileged to be heading up Scotland's largest public services union. UNISON Scotland represents over 150,000 members, over three quarters of whom are women.

Achieving equality for them and so many of our under-represented members is a key priority.

I have been a UNISON activist and member of staff for 30 years. I was young once and started my campaigning work then as we came

Tracey Dalling talks here about her new leadership role and the challenges ahead.

together to find a place in UNISON to have our voices heard. For many of our women members they are still trying to find their voice and make it heard.

Never more so than our Glasgow women battling to secure not just fairness in how they are regarded within society but equal pay for the critical roles they play in our

communities. Without them our schools won't be clean, our kids given a hot dinner and supported as they learn. Our most vulnerable in society won't have care in their homes as they live out their lives.

I am in awe of their resilience as their fight continues. They are the UNISON Scotland we aspire to be. I hear them loud and clear and will stand with them as they strike for equality.

Our campaigning work is our priority over the coming months. Pay talks are under way in most of our sectors and it's clear from early offers

they are far short of what our members deserve and need to pay the bills and put food on the table.

During the month of May we will have campaigning activities taking place every day, everywhere, to encourage UNISON membership, highlight the cost of living crisis and maximise participation in our campaigns.

Everyone in UNISON has a part to play. Thank you to our members, activists and staff for the work you do, together, in your contributions to our union and society. Together, in UNISON, we make a difference.

Housing and Care wins 3.5% rise and four-day week talks

By Chloe Graham

Housing & Care comms officer

UNISON Housing and Care Scotland members have overwhelmingly accepted a 3.5% pay rise alongside a range of wellbeing measures.

The deal covers companies across Scotland that come directly under the Wheatley Group and have UNISON recognition.

Negotiations achieved a 12 month pay deal for a 3.5% salary uplift, two wellbeing days and an extra £100 towards the employee wellbeing plan - £50 for dental and up to £50 flexible allowances.

In addition, the branch has secured a commitment from the employer to explore the implementation of a four-day working week, stating: "We will commit to investigating the possibility and will give careful consideration, where it is applicable, of reducing the working week - four days/reduction of hours within the next two years".

Branch secretary Paul Stuart said: "The pay award and commitment to investigate the four-day week is a great success for branch members.

"The overwhelming majority of our members accepted this offer and those I have spoken with are happy with the pay offer and introduction of wellbeing days and of course, are keen to see a four-day working week implemented."

HE conference backs Scottish call for devolved bargaining

By Lorcan Mullen

Regional organiser

Scotland's call for devolved pay bargaining was backed with near unanimous support at the recent UNISON Higher Education (HE) Conference in February.

The Scottish HE Committee will now work with supporting organisers to devise a strategy and campaign to make this policy a reality for Scottish university workers.

The Scottish HE committee has long supported this fundamental change in HE pay bargaining, with bitter recent experience of repeated impositions, chronically unresolved disputes, and even a 0% offer in 2020.

Delegates to the HE conference heard excellent speeches from Allison Buchanan, University of the West of Scotland, who moved the motion and Owen Cox, Aberdeen University, who seconded it.

With the support of the Service Group leadership secured in advance, and with warm support from the Cymru/Wales delegation, conference overwhelmingly backed the motion.

Fight goes on as Hairmyres fails to bring hard working staff in house

By Danny Phillips

Communications officer

UNISON Scotland is deeply disappointed that NHS Lanarkshire has not brought domestic, catering, portering, switchboard and security services back in house in University Hospital Hairmyres.

Despite the chance to change, the services will continue to be run by ISS Healthcare, a private company.

NHS Lanarkshire say their strategic aim is to bring these

services in house.

They have also just completed a thorough review of the soft facilities management services at University Hospital Hairmyres which they do every seven years. However, they have decided to continue to use a private company to run these services.

Commenting on the NHS Lanarkshire review and decision Lilian Macer, convener of UNISON Scotland and employee director on NHS Lanarkshire Health Board said: "It is deeply

disappointing that cleaning, catering, portering, switchboard and security will continue to be delivered by a private company in University Hospital Hairmyres.

"It is a real blow to hard working hospital staff. PFI contracts are not value for money, they do not provide better services and staff are under less favourable terms and conditions. It's more efficient if everyone works in the one team in the NHS.

"We have had years of promises from Scottish government and NHS Lanarkshire board say they have a strong desire to see these services return to being provided by an in-house team.

"But words will not improve services for patients nor improve the lives of the hard working staff who deliver them.

"We will not stop our campaign until we see an end to PFI in Lanarkshire NHS"

Democracy, fairness and recovery: UNISON Manifesto stands up for services and people who provide them

By Stephen Low

Policy officer

The stakes in this year's council elections on 5 May could scarcely be higher. Local decision making and direct provision of services is under attack as never before.

This isn't just a(nother) slap in the face for a hard pressed local government workforce. It is an attack on everyone's right to high quality, affordable, and accountable services.

UNISON Scotland's manifesto does what political parties seem unwilling to. We stand up for local government, its services and the people who provide them.

We challenge those standing for election to act as champions of their areas rather than managers of decline or operators of a transmission belt from Holyrood.

The services provided by council workers are what makes a decent society possible. They should not be thought of as a cost to people, but an achievement of our society.

Far from being a drain on the economy it is the services that councils provide - from refuse collection to education that are the

Council Elections X



TRACEY DALLING Scottish secretary **LILIAN MACER** Scottish convener

'Services provided by council workers are what make a decent society possible'



foundation that the rest of the economy is built on.

Everyone relies on these services and those who provide them are entitled to respect, recognition and reward for their efforts.

Despite this councils have been being undermined for years.

The Scottish Government has unfairly underfunded councils and increasingly dictates how the money that is provided is to be spent. In the last parliament they

proposed removing schools from local authority control.

Now under the guise of a 'national care service' the plan is to hive social work services off to quangos.

Local government should not be treated as an administrative arm of national government. It has a democratic mandate and legal responsibilities of its own.

Councils should be empowered to lead in their areas

Just as the people of Scotland should be able to expect first class services, UNISON members should be able to expect a working environment which enables them to deliver first class services; and be fairly rewarded for doing so.

These are the principles that UNISON will be raising during the elections - and every day afterwards.

Social work members win promise of fit for purpose facility for staff and families

By David Smith

Branch dep serv cond officer

Following a recent grievance by UNISON members in Children and Families social work, West Dunbartonshire Council has instructed officers to deliver a fit for purpose, modern facility in the Vale of Leven area for staff and service users of the Children and Families team.

This follows a lengthy dispute dating back to 2019 which included two grievances and two formal strike ballots, returning majorities for industrial action.

The collective grievance

submitted in June 2021 was substantially upheld last month.

Sean Davenport, branch steward said: "The coming year's budget and the commitment to a Children and Families premises in the Vale of Leven which is fit for purpose is a huge gain for our members and service users.

"UNISON members' efforts should be recognised as their commitment to service delivery has helped to deliver this outcome."

He added: "UNISON members were clear from the very outset that the decision to close a children and families office in Alexandria without a

suitable or sufficient local alternative was a disastrous move, which would severely impact the citizens in our community who rely on these local services.

"This desire and commitment to ensuring that the citizens they serve should receive the highest and top quality service provision is to be recognised and commended. UNISON welcomes the commitment from the leader of the council through its budget that service provision which is fit for purpose will return to the Alexandria area."

Following the council decision, management will work with frontline staff to

scope out what is needed, look for suitable space in the Vale of Leven area that can be refurbished, or identify the need for a new building.

A report will be brought to a future council meeting to allow councillors to agree the budget required to deliver what the Children and Families team needs.

Council leader, Jonathan McColl, who met with the members, and heard their powerful and emotional testimony, praised the "fantastic and committed staff team" and pledged to give them "the tools they need to do the excellent job they are capable of and want to deliver."

Branches urged to use new fund for support and organising

By Lilian Macer
Scottish convener

The new Branch Support and Organising Fund (BSOF) should be launched at the end March 2022.

This fund aims to kick start new projects led by branches and across regions.

Conference 2021 set the fund at 2% of subscription income each year and for 2022 this will see Scotland receive £430,108 for the year. Funds

can carry over from year to year and the balance of Regional Pool accounts will be available after the NEC's final accounts are confirmed.

The Regional Pool had been 0.5% a year so this represents a significant new investment within Scotland. Branches have been encouraged to use their Organising Framework returns to indicate their early interest in applying to the fund. Bids can be received from individual

branches, groups of branches and regional Self Organised Groups and young members.

Decision making will be led by regional lay group set up for the purpose. The Scottish fund will be chaired by myself as convener and supported by the Scottish secretary who will decide how to resource the successful bids.

At the February Scottish Council, we agreed that the Scottish secretary and I would

organise workshops for branches to understand the agreed protocols and process to access the new organising fund and I would urge you to access one of these meetings.

Bids are encouraged to promote growing the union through branch and collective organising and recruitment initiatives and campaigns; as well as developing long term sustainable organisational capacity.

Call for support as Napier and Queen Margaret strike on pay and pensions

UNISON members at Edinburgh Napier University took three days strike on 28 February in a dispute on pay, with a further week of strikes planned for April alongside participating branches in England.

Meanwhile, Queen Margaret University UNISON members also took action alongside their UCU colleagues, who have already taken extensive action both on pay and pensions.

The dispute comes after a further poor, imposed pay offer from the UK-level employers' association. A UK wide ballot for strike action saw these two Scottish universities pass the government's 50% ballot threshold with a vote for strike action.

UNISON head of higher education, Lorcan Mullen said: "Something must be done to address the in-work poverty, low morale, staff turnover and obscene inequality we see on our university campuses.



"Principals and senior management cannot ignore the cost of living crisis engulfing their workforce - they must listen and act."

Branches are urged to show solidarity by contacting unison@napier.ac.uk to send messages of support and donations to the Napier branch industrial action fund.



UNISON demands above inflation pay rises as costs soar

By Kate Ramsden
SiU editor

The spiralling costs of food and fuel and the stark possibility that many of our low paid members could be forced to choose between eating and heating provides the bleak backdrop to this year's pay round.

A number of our service groups have already embarked on pay negotiations, mindful that the unfolding cost of living crisis and soaring inflation rates mean decent pay rises for our hardworking members are even more critical.

FE members reject below inflation offer

In Further education (FE) UNISON has lodged a formal dispute with college bosses after its members overwhelmingly rejected the latest pay offer by 92%.

The pay offer, a flat rate ranging from 2.1% to 4.3%, falls far short of rocketing rates of inflation. UNISON will now consult its members on next steps - including industrial action.

Chris Greenshields, UNISON Scotland's Further Education branch secretary, said: "Our dedicated college staff have gone above and beyond during the pandemic to ensure that colleges remained open, services for staff and

students did not deteriorate and that students were able to complete their courses.

"This was often in very difficult circumstances and the least they expected was a pay rise which matched inflation. Instead, they are being asked to accept cuts to jobs, increased workloads and a real-terms pay cut which will leave them significantly worse off than last year."

Significant rise needed to tackle NHS staffing crisis

In Health, UNISON, together with other unions, has submitted a joint pay claim for NHS workers in Scotland.

It calls for the Scottish Government to make a significantly above inflation pay rise to address rising fuel and household costs; planned tax and national insurance increases; and to recover lost earnings due to years of real terms pay cuts.

NHS Scotland is facing a staffing crisis. An above inflation pay increase for all



Thousands across services marched in Edinburgh against the pay cap in 2017

NHS staff is essential to stem the flow of staff leaving NHS Scotland, to begin to support the retention of current staff and improve recruitment into the growing number of vacancies across NHS Scotland.

Wilma Brown, chair of UNISON Scotland health committee, said: "UNISON members across our NHS in Scotland have worked tirelessly.

"Our communities and political leaders seemed happy enough to recognise our members' commitment to patients during the pandemic. It is now time for the Scottish Government to back that recognition up and make a realistic offer on pay."

Argyll & Bute social work assistants win major regrading

By Simon Macfarlane
Regional organiser

Social work assistants have won a major rise of £785, backdated a year, at the bottom of their new grade rising by 3,395 after four increments in an Argyll & Bute regrading claim.

Issues including staffing shortages, challenges of the rural geography and moves to extend community provision as opposed to institutional, had meant a significant change in the demands of the work of the members.

They got together and with the support of the branch submitted a regrading claim for community care assistants in adult care, learning disabilities and mental health.

Despite some setbacks along the way, the job evaluation panel determined that the revised jobs should be graded one level higher than the existing grade.

This was achieved by dogged determination and self-organisation by social work assistants and close work with Argyll & Bute UNISON reps.

Mary Watt, branch secretary, said: "This was a great result for our social work assistant members. It is great to see their contribution being appropriately recognised at last.

"This was the second major step forward for social work members in Argyll & Bute, following on from us securing SJC (national) rates for standby in 2021.

"Social work remains a challenging place to work, however these results show UNISON is delivering for our members in social work and we hope to continue to build on this in 2022."



Local Govt rejects 'insulting offer' outright

Meanwhile, in local government, the joint unions rejected outright a pay offer from COSLA amounting to 2%, which "could turn a cost of living crisis into a catastrophe".

The offer fell far short of both the trade union claim and is well behind the current rates of inflation.

Johanna Baxter, UNISON Scotland's head of local government, pointed out that the offer is, unbelievably, weighted towards those on the highest pay and will further exacerbate the issue of endemic low pay which plagues this sector.

Offer is, unbelievably, weighted towards those on highest pay'

Those earning above £40k per would receive an increase of £800 plus, with some receiving an uplift of £2,000, whilst those on the lowest pay, 51% of the local government workforce and mainly women workers, would only receive an uplift of £500.

Johanna said: "This offer is an insult to key workers. The lowest paid workers would still not reach a £10 per hour rate of pay under this proposal never mind the £12 per hour called for in our claim.

"How anyone could describe this offer as fair and equitable is beyond us?"

New organising packs for members working in education

By Janet Stewart
Regional organiser

As we emerge from the pandemic, UNISON Scotland's Education Issues Group (EIG) has bounced back to its organising best with a new workplan and new easy-to-follow organising and campaigning packs for branch or organiser use.

The group has met throughout the pandemic to advise on and share information about Scottish Government guidance and about how branches were managing the crisis.

Lorraine Thomson, UNISON Scotland EIG Chair, said: "Our education members

'Our education members worked tirelessly through the pandemic - it is vital they are organised' LORRAINE THOMSON



worked tirelessly through the pandemic and delivered this crucial service across Scotland. It is vital that education members are organised across workplaces now.

"Together with our 'ABC Guide to the EIG' the workplan focuses on organising, recruitment and campaigning in areas we've identified as priority.

"Alongside this workplan we're providing practical guides for branches to use to organise locally. For each issue prioritised there is an

EIG branch pack which provides an easy to follow step-by-step guide and includes easily adaptable graphics and QR codes.

The QR codes can take potential members through to joining UNISON in one step or can also be used to take members to branch or regional pages.

The EIG organising and campaigning packs are already available to branches and organisers. The current guides cover recruiting around SSSC registration, campaigning to

ensure premises continue to be COVID clean in our revamped guide 'Cleaner Schools, Safer Schools' and organising around work time to complete essential paperwork in our Time for Paperwork campaign pack.

Lorraine added, "We are working towards having a branch pack for every area we have identified as a priority. As soon as these are signed off we will get them out to everyone."

EIG is also focusing on the longstanding issue of our education term time workers receiving annual leave time back should they fall ill during their leave.

Watch out for a briefing on this and also the relaunch of the EIG Facebook page.

Members and branches rally to support as UNISON condemns invasion of Ukraine

UNISON was one of the first trade unions to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. We have also offered practical solidarity and support to Ukrainian unions through the international trade union movement.

General secretary Christina McAnea said: "We called for an immediate withdrawal and a peaceful, negotiated settlement. Our international team has been in contact with our sister unions in Ukraine and have been liaising closely with Public Services International and European Public Service Union to build support for the Ukrainian unions.

"We will continue to work with the international trade union movement to offer support to Ukraine."

UNISON has already donated £10,000 to go to the ITUC solidarity fund and is encouraging members and branches to donate to the Disasters Emergency Committee appeal at



Dingwall people 'humbled' by Ukrainian lorry driver's thanks

<https://www.dec.org.uk/appeal/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal>

Lyn rallies community support

Meanwhile, when war first broke out, Lyn Wormald, Highland Healthcare branch international officer, kickstarted a community campaign in the small north of Scotland town of Dingwall to support the Ukrainian people.

Watching horrified as the tragedy unfolded and people had to flee their homes and country, Lyn decided to go and buy the kind of

essential personal items that they might need.

Before she knew it, this had snowballed with friends, neighbours and strangers all rallying round to support the cause. She posted her thanks on Facebook and from that numerous people offered items and drop off points for donations.

Lyn said: "I've now started a local group 'Ross-shire help for Ukraine' and it has been a non-stop roller coaster. I've parcelled up and deposited to the transit depot lots of boxes.

"I've had local businesses



offer me their premises to store and use for packing up more donations. It has just been absolutely amazing how quickly this has all come together."

In a final twist, a Ukrainian lorry driver, who had left home just before war broke out to drive for his company to Holland and then to UK, saw Lyn sorting out boxes and came in to see her.

Lyn added: "He was amazed that a wee village in north Scotland was doing this to help his family and friends back home in Ukraine.

"He came back next day and helped load the van, saying it was an honour to help us as we were helping his country. What a lovely feeling it gave us all that day. Most humbling."

Pardons: Scotland's witchcraft and disability shame

The Scottish Parliament is being asked to right the wrongs of over 3,837 convictions and deaths of Scots accused of witchcraft over the course 173 years and some 286 years after the Witchcraft Act 1563 was repealed.

The accused were largely women, the poor, or people that stood out for being different. Disabled people or the mothers of disabled children were commonly accused of being witches throughout this period.

The last past person to be executed for witchcraft in Britain was from Scotland.

The victim of cruel gossip among villagers, Janet Horne, was accused of turning her daughter into a horse and riding her lame to account for her daughter's physical disability. At the time Janet was elderly and showing signs that we would now recognise as

Alison Mitchell, chair of the Scottish Disabled Members Committee, looks at the history of witch-hunts and its link with attitudes to disability.



dementia. Janet and her daughter were both charged and convicted of witchcraft.

While the daughter escaped, Janet wasn't as lucky. She was tarred and feathered, placed into a barrel and burned alive.

A pardon would be the culmination of a two-year campaign by the Witches of Scotland Group, headed by Claire Mitchell QC.

To put the scale of the crime into context Claire noted in an article in the Guardian last December, that the Salem Witch Trials paled into insignificance in comparison, with a mere 300 people accused and 19 executed.

Scotland excelled, but to its shame, with five times as many executions here than



Memorial to Janet Horne in Dornoch. The date on the stone, 1722, should probably be 1727.

elsewhere in Europe.

Attitudes towards disability and disabled people have been shaped by history, influenced by religion, astronomy, and culture.

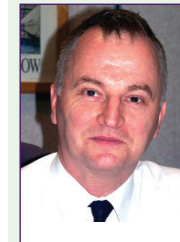
This has given rise to deep-rooted assumptions, attitudes and prejudices that continue to disadvantage and discriminate against disabled people in all parts of their lives.

End of era as three UNISON Scotland stalwarts retire

By Danny Phillips *communications officer*
and Simon Macfarlane *regional officer*

Three key, widely known and respected staff with well over a century of experience, retire this month and we thank them and wish them all our best.

John Gallacher, regional manager



John helped established partnership working in Scotland's NHS. It's testament to him and the health committee that the partnership still exists. More recently John had strategic oversight of bargaining in UNISON Scotland and in developing the FE Branch who have made significant progress on pay and national job evaluation.

There is hardly a patch in the west of Scotland that John hasn't had responsibility for. John said: "It has been a privilege to spend my working life in the cause of building our great union and improving the lot of working people in Scotland. Keep up the great work". A regular bagger of Munros and lately a keen cyclist John regularly swung for UNISON in the annual golf tournament against Thompsons.

Joe Lynch, regional organiser

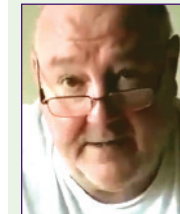


Joe oversaw the introduction of Meat Hygiene Service in Scotland in aftermath of BSE outbreak. A tough time for meat inspectors, Joe was instrumental in organising these members and supported them in their many struggles. More recently Joe has been working with Social Work and Housing Issues groups.

Joe was our Doonhamer organiser for so long he could drive to Dumfries on auto pilot. He was also a great player and organiser for Allan Glen's Rugby club.

Joe said: "When I started work as the clerical assistant in the then NALGO Scottish District Office, I never imagined that many years on I would be working in a job that has given me so much to be grateful for. I have met so many wonderful strong, kind and selfless people"

Willie Duffy, health head of bargaining



...stands up for people including his colleagues. Willie is taking flexible retirement but will continue part-time to fulfil his role as branch secretary for the UNISON

staff ACTS and Unite branch and chair of the national trade union side.

Willie helped win the pandemic £500 bonus payment. As an expert in pensions, he continues to battle against proposed increases in member contributions in the NHS scheme which disproportionately affect the low paid.

Back in the day Willie was a mean 5-a-side and snooker player.

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