

Happy festive season to all our members ...especially to those delivering services over the holiday

New course programme for 2017 now out and online - p2



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PUBLIC WORKS:

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Scotland in UNISON

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

Glasgow IT staff stand up against privatisation

by John Stevenson
SiU editor

UNISON's Scottish Council of branches has pledged Scotland-wide support for Glasgow members fighting the privatisation of the council's information and communication technology (ICT) services.

Brian Smith, Glasgow UNISON branch secretary, told delegates that privatisation plans were not just a threat to Glasgow but an attempt to get a foothold into all Scottish local authorities.

He said that Glasgow Council had "crossed the line" by embarking on this plan.

He was backed by Gordon McKay, chair of UNISON Scotland's LabourLink, who pledged to campaign against privatisation and said that Labour councillors going down that road should "not expect any financial backing from UNISON."

80 percent of members voted in a ballot to resist the sell-off with a massive 90 per cent voting for action which started with a strike on 17 November.

Strike breaking plans? Page 2



Glasgow ICT workers demonstrating at the City Chambers.

Councils hit by 87% of devolved job cuts

Scottish councils have suffered a staggering 87% of all devolved job cuts, UNISON Scotland has told the Scottish Parliament Local Government Committee.

And Scottish councils say that £350 million in Scottish Government cuts last year has cost 7,000 jobs.

In its budget evidence to the Parliament committee in October, the union said:

"While the Scottish budget has been cut by 5% local government budget have been cut by 11%. Of the 31,000 jobs cut (allowing for transfers) in the devolved public sector, a staggering 87% have been in local government."

And at last echoing what UNISON Scotland has been saying for years, a statement from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) said: "A further

reduction in budget of similar proportions, on an already reduced base, will have even more severe consequences for job losses in councils and have a wider knock on effect for jobs within communities.

"We need to remember that services are delivered by these people - no people, no services to communities."

Despite Westminster cuts, there is room for the Scottish Government to take action.

Going forward the Scottish government will no longer be tied to funding levels set via the Barnett formula, with around 40% of devolved expenditure funded via Scottish taxes.

"UNISON is calling on the Scottish government to use its powers to increase funding for local government", says the UNISON submission.

See the full submission on the website under Responses and Submissions.

Communications Awards 2016/17

Don't be too modest! Enter the UNISON Scotland Communications Awards.

Not only is this competition a good opportunity to give you and your branch some well-deserved recognition for the excellent work you do, but it will also help us build a stronger union by sharing best practice, your innovative ideas and your enthusiasm.

The award categories are:

- Best printed publication
- Best campaign
- Best online presence
- Special recruitment prize

As usual, the UNISON 'family' is sponsoring the awards with cash prizes of £150 for first, £100 for second and £50 for third.

Branches and self organised groups can enter on the UNISON Scotland website by the closing date of **Wednesday 18 January 2017**.

The awards will be presented at the February Scottish Council meeting.



Join the Stand Up To Racism events

UNISON is backing major Stand Up To Racism demonstrations against racism, Islamophobia, antisemitism and fascism in Glasgow and London on 18 March 2017.

The Glasgow event will assemble at 11am in George Square, with the London event starting at 12.00 in Trafalgar Square.

In the meantime on **14 December 2016**, Stand Up To Racism is hosting a 'Confronting the rise in racism' event at the Daisy Park Centre, Cassels Street, Motherwell from 7-9pm.

And on 20 January at 6pm there will be protests against racism on the day of Trump's inauguration at the Donald Dewar statue in Buchanan Street, Glasgow, and the US consulate at 3 Regent Terrace Edinburgh.

Support for workers with terminal illness



Trade unions in South Lanarkshire Council have welcomed the council's signing of the Dying to Work Charter.

This commits the council to support staff who have been diagnosed with a terminal illness including supporting them to remain at work for as long as possible.

Andy Murphy, chair of the Joint Trade Union Committee and convener for UCATT the building workers' union, said:

"We warmly welcome the council supporting people who have the most terrible diagnosis of a terminal illness. At this time a worker needs to be confident that their employer is there to support them.

Tony Slaven of UNISON said: "Some workers will be unfit to continue at work and will need to be supported in that way. Others will want to continue to work so that they have the dignity of controlling their own life. This will require support from their manager and their colleagues. For some, understanding that their decisions on how they wish to live their remaining life will be supported by their work is crucial."

Glasgow ICT privatisation

From Page 1

"The Labour council's Executive Committee had voted by 9-7 to agree its chief executive's proposal to privatise the council's ICT provision to a Canadian based global corporation", explained Glasgow UNISON's Ian Leech.

In Glasgow the current ICT contract is a joint venture between the council and Serco. The council retains considerable control and staff are largely on council conditions.

UNISON believes that this privatisation will result in higher long-term costs, loss of control of a key council function, a negative future impact for social care, schools, home care, financial payments, council tax collection and benefits and other vital council services, and overtime, a threat to workers' jobs, wages and conditions as they move into the private sector.

UNISON members have produced an initial response document that takes up the overall problems with the council's plans.

Strike breaking plans?

In a further twist, Chris Stephens MP, an ex Glasgow UNISON activist, lodged an Early Day Motion in Parliament condemning reports that adverts for temporary posts in ICT had appeared in IT magazines.

The EDM notes: "hiring agency workers to replace workers on strike has been illegal since 1973."

Ian said: "The vacancies clearly reflect the jobs of the 39 striking members and are available for the duration of the selective strike action.

"This has resulted in accusations that the Labour council is recruiting an army of 'scab labour' to cover the work of strikers", added Ian.

Colleges in last ditch talks for fair pay deal

As we went to press, a special whole day of negotiations was planned on 8 December to try to reach a settlement in the long, and at times bitter, FE colleges pay dispute.

John Gallacher, UNISON Scotland regional manager, said: "UNISON hopes these crucial all day talks will bring a fair settlement to this year

This story is changing fast. Check unison-scotland.org for latest news

long dispute."

But to keep up the pressure, action short of strike action also started on 8 December with a further 48 hour strike planned if the talks were to fail.

Talks at ACAS, then directly with the employers on 7 December had seen no resolution

after two days of strike and on 22 November members voted by 89% to 11% in a ballot to reject the most recent offer.

Shirley Sephton, vice chair of UNISON Scotland's education committee said: "This strike has always been about equality of pay and terms and conditions.

"The employers' last offer rewarded the high earners and not the lower-paid support staff - the majority of whom would receive no more than the previous offer."

Chris Greenshields, chair of UNISON Scotland's FE committee said: "Support staff are the backbone of Scotland's colleges and don't deserve to be treated as second-class citizens."

Gas branch recruitment award 'credit to activists'

by Greig Kelbie
Local organiser

UNISON Gas Branch Scotland claimed bragging rights at the annual energy branch seminar in November as they were awarded the Mike Jeram Trophy for most improved membership figures during the year.

The branch, now the largest energy branch in UNISON, has had an incredible year and boasts more than 1,600 members.

Branch secretary Lindsay McNaught said that the award was a great achievement and a credit to the dedicated activists:

"We have an incredibly hard working network of branch activists, across our main sites in Uddingston, Glasgow and Edinburgh, who have played a big role in making sure that the trophy returns to Scotland.

"With great support from regional organising staff and focussed campaigns we have been able to effectively engage with the workforce."



Gas Branch Scotland with the Mike Jeram Trophy.

Lindsay said that localised campaigns and the high profile holiday pay case against British Gas, first brought to employment tribunal in 2012, which ruled that holiday pay must take account of people who earn both commission and basic pay was a massive factor

in the branch's success. "We were able to use the Lock v British Gas case to show the workforce that when we are organised and effectively campaign, we can take on these large employers and win.

"Our Raise it, Log it, Fix it! campaign was also another big

factor in our success.

"We actively encouraged members to report system faults meaning that we forced the business to act, relieving our members from added stress.

"Our goal is to retain the trophy in 2017", added Lindsay.

New 2017 education programme for activists and members launched

by Nancy Kelly
Regional organiser

Delegates from across Scotland attended the Celebrate Learning Day on 29 November.

The new combined activists and member education programme for 2017 was warmly received (as were the free books, pens and notebooks!)

Delegates heard inspiring words from assistant general secretary Roger McKenzie who stressed the importance of flexibility for future stewards' training and activists' development.

He also encouraged more direct mentoring for new reps and for members returning to learning.

He greatly encouraged branches to use member learning and all education as an organising tool and closed by emphasising the importance of solidarity and



Assistant general secretary Roger McKenzie addresses the Celebrate Learning Day

unity in a world becoming ever more challenging and dangerous. There was then the

opportunity to attend two workshops - one on using Education to Build the Branch

and one on Mental Health Awareness. Delegates left enthusiastic and inspired.

Social care staff urged to complete Living Wage survey

From 1 October 2016 social care workers should be paid £8.25 per hour.

UNISON is urging social care workers to help it enforce the Living Wage and Fair Work by completing its Living Wage survey.

The new social care rights from 1 October as demanded by Scottish Government are:

- The Scottish Living Wage of £8.25

- Fair working conditions
- An effective voice for staff when negotiating with your employer
- Secure working arrangements
- Opportunities to advance your career in social care

All this should be embedded in the revised funding of the organisation you work for.

Members are being urged to complete the survey and tell UNISON what's happening on

the ground.

If you work in social care and are not being paid the Living Wage - or if your terms and conditions have been altered as a result of receiving the Living Wage - then you need to let us know.

Click on the banner on the UNISON Scotland website to do the survey.



Councils and partnerships sign up to UNISON's Ethical Care Charter

by John Stevenson and Kate Ramsden

Aberdeen City and North Ayrshire councils, along with Inverclyde Council and Health & Social Care Partnership, have become the latest organisations in Scotland to sign up to UNISON's Ethical Care Charter.

Renfrewshire Council was first to sign up in 2014.

They have pledged that all home carers will be paid the Scottish living wage of £8.25 per hour and properly trained and supported to do their job.

The City of Edinburgh has also pledged to work with UNISON towards implementing the charter.

Aberdeen signed up in October after the Integrated Joint Board which manages health and social care in the city and Bon Accord Care, the arms length company which provides care services, had already given it the thumbs up.

Aberdeen City branch secretary Deirdre Macdonald, who has led the negotiations on the charter, said: "We are delighted that the board, Bon Accord Care and the council has recognised the importance of having a social care workforce that is properly paid and properly trained and supported to deliver the best possible care services for our older and more vulnerable citizens."



UNISON and Inverclyde sign up to the union's Ethical Care Charter

"The commitment made by the council in signing up to the charter means that it will now be rolled out to all care services including providers from whom the council commissions care.

"We have seen members sacked by text, working waking night shift on a flat rate and not getting paid for travel time taking them below the minimum wage.

"Under the Ethical Care Charter all this should come to an end and the branch will work hard to ensure that it does."

Robin Taggart, secretary of UNISON Inverclyde Branch, said: "We are pleased to recognise that Inverclyde Council and Inverclyde Health

& Social Care Partnership has become one of the first in Scotland to adopt UNISON's Ethical Care Charter.

"It clearly demonstrates a shared commitment to achieving fair work, better pay and improved quality of care for everyone employed in the sector in Inverclyde."

Louise McDaid secretary of North Ayrshire UNISON said: "Home care workers are at the heart of a decent, caring society and do a complex, difficult job, often under tough circumstances.

"I am delighted that North Ayrshire Council has recognised the invaluable role they play. By signing

UNISON's Ethical Care Charter NAC has sent a clear message that quality care depends on quality pay and conditions, and on putting users at the heart of a properly funded service."

UNISON launched the Ethical Care Charter in 2012. It provides a set of standards that we want councils to stick to when they commission homecare services.

It calls for service users to be given the time to talk with their homecare workers and receive the same worker wherever possible.

It calls for homecare workers to be treated with dignity and allowed to do their jobs better, to be paid at least a living wage - including travel time - and to receive regular quality training.

UNISON Scotland launches innovative Duty of Care app

by Watty Gaffney

Comms & Campaigns Committee

Worried about patient safety? Is short staffing affecting your ability to provide clinical care?

The free UNISON Duty of Care app provides you with the tools to raise concerns and meet your obligations as a healthcare professional.

UNISON regional organiser, Matt McLaughlin said: "In a recent survey 86% of UNISON nurses told us that they had left care undone and 63% said that there were not enough staff on shift to deliver safe and compassionate care.

"I know from speaking to UNISON members across Scotland that many of our members have lost confidence in the Datix system, because nothing ever seems to get done.

"The UNISON app will give members the tools to quickly and efficiently report their concerns to the director of nursing and with their union."

The app, developed by UNISON, is free and can be used by registered and non registered nurses, and will automatically send a report by email to UNISON and to the local Director of Nursing.

Its not a replacement for Datix and members are still encouraged



to comply with their employer's policies and procedures to report professional and clinical concerns.

Matt added: "Under the

NMC Code, registered nurses have an obligation to raise concerns when they feel that patient safety is compromised, but our nursing assistant and health care support workers should feel free to express concerns over patient safety as well - they are after all part of the healthcare team.

"As part of our work UNISON will be seeking regular meetings with directors of nursing to discuss member concerns raised via the app, and more importantly we will be pressing for health boards to take long term, positive action in response to our members concerns."

Violence against staff doubles in 10 years

UNISON's annual Violence at Work Survey 2016 shows a rise of 20,000 to 40,000 violent assaults per year in the last decade against public service workers in Scotland, with a significant increase in violent assaults against council staff.

Scott Donohoe, chair of UNISON Scotland's health and safety committee said: "We cannot ignore a doubling of the figures over 10 years. It is also reasonable to make the correlation between the swingeing cuts to councils and increase in violence to council workers."

See the full story at unison-scotland.org/about-us/health-and-safety/

Highland decides in-house is best

UNISON has welcomed Highland Council's decision to bring its grass cutting service back in-house from 2017.

An options analysis identified that an in-house service could provide the service at a similar cost and level of service as outsourcing with improvements in productivity with more efficient plant.

And there was more good news when the council agreed to keep its janitorial and catering services in-house. UNISON argued successfully on the Redesign Board against an arms-length service.

Highland UNISON's John Gibson said: "People who work for Highland Council have chosen to work for the council and to live and work in their communities. The best people to give advice on how to improve services and make them more efficient are the people who deliver them.

"We are delighted that the Redesign Board have shown confidence in their greatest asset which is their staff."

UNISON exposes Edinburgh's hidden library cuts

All Edinburgh libraries face reduced opening hours, some will close and merge with other services, mobile library stops will vanish and Community Learning and Development jobs are to be axed in a £6.4 million cuts package.

Amanda Kerr, UNISON Edinburgh organiser, says the union is worried that the council is trying to slip these hidden and drastic cuts through without any real public consultation.

"Cuts have already been approved under the guise of 'transformation' but we believe that service users are unaware of what these proposals actually mean", she said.

"UNISON also believes the council may not have met its obligations under the Public Service Equality Duty.

"These cuts affect some of our most vulnerable and deprived citizens. Users have a right to be properly consulted on what these cuts mean and how they will impact on our communities. We urge the public to contact their councillors before it's too late."

In the next issue

• NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde finalists in apprenticeships awards.

UNISON slams attacks on democracy in Turkey

UNISON's Scottish Council is to write to the Turkish ambassador condemning the Turkish government's closing down of 370 non governmental organisations including the Free Women's Congress (KJA), the Rojova Association, children's charities and legal and other associations.

Proposing the move, South Lanarkshire's Margaret

Gallacher urged branches to write to and make links with women's organisations in Turkey.

The meeting condemned President Erdogan's attacks on human rights and the imprisonment of MPs including Figen Yuksedag (who UNISON Scotland reps met in Edinburgh last year) and Selahattin Demirtas, joint leaders of the People's Democracy Party (HDP).



Figen Yuksedag (centre) with John Stevenson, Stephen Smellie, Viv Thomson and Margaret Gallacher in Edinburgh last year.

Children first - ethical social work with refugee children

by Kate Ramsden

Comms & Campaigns Committee

Ten years on from UNISON Scotland and BASW Scotland's first ever guide for social workers on ethical working with asylum seeker children, **Child's Welfare Paramount?**, a national conference on Social Work with Refugees and Asylum Seekers has again highlighted the important role of social work in supporting refugee children.

Organised by BASW (the British Association of Social Workers), SWAN (Social Work Action Network) and UNISON, the authors of the guide, John Stevenson and Kate Ramsden both attended the conference.

John said: "The overall message from the day was the need for social work and social workers to see ourselves and act as a force for social change, by actively involving ourselves in not only supporting refugee children but also in speaking up and acting for all children affected by government actions - and that includes promoting children's rights on issues like, poverty, housing, education and opportunities to fulfil their potential."

As Scotland prepares to play its part in taking in unaccompanied child refugees, UNISON Scotland's Social Work Issues Group plans to work with relevant organisations to update the Scottish guide.

See the full report at unison-scotland.org/social-work/

Celebrating Stars in our Schools

On 25 November UNISON branches across Scotland celebrated 'Stars in Our Schools' - a day dedicated to support staff in schools.

Stars in Our Schools is all about the fantastic work support staff do every day, making sure the public knows just how vital their often unrecognised work is to helping our children learn and develop.

In Angus, new branch secretary Chris Boyle organised the branch to get a Stars in Our Schools goodie bag out to all support staff members.

371 goodie bags, with 200 metres of ribbon, were delivered to 52 schools over two days by Chris, retired member Gordon Watson and local organiser Anne McEvoy.

In Aberdeenshire Susan Kennedy, Aberdeenshire UNISON assistant branch secretary, reported: "Around 50 of our schools and nurseries took part, next year we hope to have all of our education settings involved across Aberdeenshire with the support from our Education & Children's Services director."

In Aberdeen, Lesley Adam, head teacher at Dyce Academy paid tribute to school staff in an email to UNISON's Karen Davidson: "School Support staff are vital to the day to day business of delivering the highest quality of learning and teaching



At St Margaret's in Montrose Deborah O'Donnell celebrated her birthday with a goodie bag.



Aberdeenshire steward Maureen Grady helped organise the event at Alford Campus, just one of the 50 schools and nurseries that took part in Aberdeenshire.

for all our young people.

"They play such a key role in supporting teachers in the many and varying challenges that they face on a day to day basis. I am very proud of the quality and professionalism of the support staff at Dyce Academy and their collegiate approach which underpins our positive ethos of care for all who work at the school."

Support staff cover many roles, from ones you see every day such as teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors, to some of the more hidden roles such as cleaners and caretakers.

New campaign calls for fossil free pensions

UNISON Scotland is backing a new push for responsible pensions with **Common Weal and Friends of the Earth Scotland**.

In the lead up to local elections in May the 'Reinvest Scotland' campaign will bring this challenge to our councils: that now more than ever, in a time of spending cuts and straining public services, there is no excuse for gambling away public funds whilst passing up significant investment that could be helping local communities prosper. Scottish council pension funds

have been shown to be investing £1.7 billion in oil, gas and coal companies. This money is driving climate change when it could instead be delivering benefits to local communities.

Some councils have shown that this money could be invested in a better way. Falkirk Council has funded 300 new homes and the Strathclyde Pension Fund has invested in renewable energy schemes.

The science tells us that to honour international agreements and keep the rise in global

temperatures to under 1.5 degrees the vast majority of fossil fuel reserves cannot be burned. That means fossil fuel companies can only keep their value if they burn all the fuel they've got on their books, leaving our planet as toast.

We need you - and everyone - to take part to make this change. UNISON members can join the campaign at www.reinvest.scot/join, raise the issue of responsible pension investment in your branch, and ask council candidates to support low-carbon pensions.

SEPA wins LGBT recruitment and organising award

UNISON's Scottish Environment and Protection Agency (SEPA) Branch won a recruitment and organising award at the LGBT annual conference in Llandudno last month.

SEPA's Fiona Gentle and William Wilson were handed the award - sponsored for the first time by UNISON Living - by union vice president Carol Sewell.

Fiona Gentle said: "William and I were very proud to accept the UNISON LGBT recruitment and organising branch award on behalf of our branch.

"This award recognised the work that has been carried out by

our branch and its members in our LGBT self-organised group (SOG) in the last year.

"SEPA UNISON began getting involved in LGBT activism after the election of myself as its first ever LGBT officer in 2015.

"The SEPA UNISON LGBT SOG, comprised of members who identify as LGBT, was launched in May 2016 and this group has been working tirelessly ever since to support each other, to identify discrimination, to increase awareness of LGBT rights and to campaign for change.

"Having this effort recognised has been fantastic."



SEPA's Fiona Gentle and William Wilson receive the award from UNISON vice president Carol Sewell

Eric Roberts

Tributes are paid in InFocus and on the UNISON website to UNISON President Eric Roberts who tragically died last month.

Scottish convener Lilian Macer paid tribute to Eric at UNISON's Scottish Council on 3 December and a bucket collection raised £968 for his MIND Blue Light charity that gives mental health support for emergency services.

Any further contributions to Annie Watson, UNISON House, 14 West Campbell Street, Glasgow, G2 6RX

We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories. Contact John Stevenson (Editor) john.stevenson@unison-edinburgh.org.uk Danny Phillips d.phillips@unison.co.uk Trisha Hamilton t.hamilton@unison.co.uk