

Scotland at UNISON Brighton Conference

Reports of Scotland's contribution at the union's annual parliament - p1, 2, 3, 4



Proud of UNISON at Pride

Members from across Scotland rally in Edinburgh - p4



PUBLIC WORKS:

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Scotland in UNISON

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Education plan: Support staff role ignored

UNISON Scotland has slammed the Scottish Government's Education Plan for ignoring the role education staff play in schools.

The union's briefing on the plan says: "...the absence of any recognition of the wider education team is very disappointing.

"While we welcome the focus on early years, childminding is not the quality early years provision that is required to make a difference in supporting children in the vital early years."

And it also warns that structural change, subject to consultation in 2017, appears to signal more worrying centralisation by taking schools out of local control by creating education regions.

The government's 'Education Delivery Plan', published on 28 June, sets out measures to reduce the attainment gap in Scottish education.

They include some budgetary devolution to schools, backed up with a wide range of national controls including direct funding,



Review next year appears to remove schools from local democratic control

standards, testing, advisors and data transparency.

And a governance review next year appears to remove schools from local democratic control.

The UNISON briefing (see it on the website) does welcome some parts of the plan, especially its commitment to "a publicly owned and run, comprehensive education system in Scotland - a mutual system, not a market

system - which supports every child to achieve."

"So, this is not a market approach with privatised schools on the English model", says the briefing.

"It is one in which schools will have autonomy, albeit within the context of a strong national policy, backed up by targets and inspection."

A pupil from the 20% least

deprived areas of Scotland is almost twice as likely as one from the 20% most deprived areas to leave school with a qualification at SCQF 6 or better (Higher equivalent or above).

But UNISON's submissions to the government stressed that that the education system alone cannot close this gap.

"It is reflective of wider inequality in our society that can only be addressed by crosscutting government action on income, taxation and strong public services", said Dave Watson, UNISON Scotland's head of policy and public affairs.

What is National Conference?

UNISON's annual National Delegate Conference is the union's ruling body. Delegates from all over the country take part in debates to choose our campaigning priorities and policies.

Every UNISON branch elects reps to attend and Scotland has about 200 delegates.

There are also service group conferences which bring together members working for the same kinds of employers. Some have their conferences at the start of the National Conference and others at other times of the year.

Conference reports

Fuller versions of the reports in this issue are on the website along with more stories at www.unison-scotland.org/conf2016/

Organising will defeat the Trade Union Act

Scottish national executive member Jane Carolan paid tribute to UNISON's magnificent efforts in lobbying to defeat some of the worst parts of the Trade Union Act



Jane Carolan

as Conference backed a strategy on workplace organisation and political campaigning across the four nations.

However she warned that the legislation still enshrines a fundamental attack on working people's right to organise in the workplace and withdraw their labour.

Jane reminded delegates that our history as a trade union movement is a history of struggle.

"We are organised, we have the right to strike, because there were brave men and women prepared to give everything to win those rights.

"We need new industrial tactics based on members' participation, workplace organisation and stewards.

"We need to continue to oppose this oppressing legislation and prepare for its repeal," said Jane, calling on the union to work with the Institute of Employment Rights to develop and promote a positive agenda for a future government.

"It's time not for sloganising but for organising," she urged.

FE staff balloted on strike over pay

Scotland's college support staff are planning an 'autumn of discontent' after college bosses failed to deliver a fair deal for support staff.

Support staff have been offered £230 compared to the £450 settlement already paid to teaching colleagues.

National negotiations broke down in June and UNISON is now consulting its members in a ballot closing on 18 July for strike action on the 2016 pay settlement.

The move follows recent

industrial action in Scotland's 26 colleges by teaching staff (represented by EIS/FELA) and a two-year deal for teaching staff.

Chris Greenshields, chair of UNISON Scotland in further education, said: "Our demand is simple and fair. As a minimum our members should receive parity with our teaching colleagues in the EIS.

"There should be equality of treatment for workers in the same sector, in the same national bargaining machinery and with the same local employers."

"The employers reportedly worked through the night to reach a deal with the EIS. Support staff in colleges deserve better. All we are asking for is to be treated fairly."

Shirley Sephton, vice chair of UNISON Scotland in further education, said: "Our members deliver key support services to colleges and students including finance, admissions, bursary services and estates. We would not wish to see these services disrupted by industrial action during 2016."

John Gallacher, UNISON lead officer for further education, said: "UNISON wishes to make a success of the new national bargaining arrangements put in place by the SNP Government. However, the machinery seems to lurch between paralysis and crisis.

"The Scottish further education bosses really need to get their act together, create momentum and deliver a fair and equal pay and grading structure, and set of terms and conditions of employment for all staff in the 26 new colleges."

Conference backs #Justice4Jannies

The 3,000 strong UNISON Conference sent messages of support to the striking Glasgow jannies as the branch updated delegates on their action.

In a special statement, Glasgow City's Sam Macartney told delegates: "Cordia and Glasgow City Council are still refusing to have any meaningful dialogue with UNISON to resolve this dispute. "In fact they are now suggesting a restructuring review of the service and duties carried out by janitors."

Since this will be under the council's cuts review it will have "a major impact on the service, jobs and community."

Sam told Conference that UNISON attempts at getting dialogue "has been spurned by the employer from the beginning of the dispute."

"The employer has been hell-bent on breaking this dispute and has spent up to £10,000 a day, nearly £200,000 a month using scab labour to attempt to break the will of the members.

"The jannies have fought on and have become more committed to achieving fair pay and conditions. See their Justice4Jannies website.

Sam called on delegates to: "Send a message to all councils. Cuts to services and attacks on members' terms and conditions are not acceptable.

"Our jannies will continue to seek fair pay and conditions like other workers in the council. They deserve justice. Please help them achieve this. Justice For Jannies!"

The janitors will be meeting at the end of July to consider the next steps in their fight for fair pay.

Supporting stewards essential to union's strength

by John Stevenson
SiU editor

Conference backed a range of measures to improve training for activists and support in dealing with stressful cases.

The motion recognised that we have lost a significant number of experienced activists because of austerity and privatisation.

The call for more flexible training, e-learning and monitoring and support for new activists was backed by a Glasgow City amendment calling for branches to be encouraged to hold more branch based courses to bring stage 1 accreditation.

Glasgow's Jim Main told delegates: "Shop stewards are the heartbeat of the union and the front line in the resistance. They need to be trained and confident."

Recognising that, Glasgow runs steward training courses in the

Young members tackle bullying

Conference lauded the Scottish Young Members' publication 'Gonnae No Dae That?' - a guide for young workers on bullying and harassment at work - and pledged to develop similar resources across the four nations.

Moving the South Lanarkshire motion in her last speech as a young member, Bernadette Lafferty told delegates that bullying and harassment at work are common problems.

This was confirmed by many of the speakers who gave moving testimony about bullying and its effect from their own experiences.

"Young people in the onset of a new career or working life need support from their colleagues and their union but



Bernadette Lafferty



Kathleen Kennedy

it doesn't always work out that way," she warned.

The Scottish young members committee constructed a survey which showed a shocking 75% of young people had experienced bullying in the workplace. However, more than half of those didn't understand what is classed as bullying so therefore it went unreported and unresolved.

She warned that with increased pressures at work caused by the continuing cuts it's likely that bullying at work will increase.

"That is why it's important to make this a national campaign and produce guidance for members and reps on how to help as well

as encouraging sector committees to raise awareness with employers of the importance of tackling bullying at work."

Aberdeenshire's Kathleen Kennedy, in her first Conference speech, told delegates: "This will not only support young members to recognise bullying and where to get help, it will also be a great tool to recruit young members."

Riverside Rocking with Scottish Borders Public Services Branch

by Greig Kelbie
Local Organiser

UNISON Scottish Borders Public Services Branch ramped up its community presence in June, by agreeing to sponsor a local music festival, Riverside Rock.

The one day festival saw more than 3,000 people attend, most coming from the Borders area.

Held at a local rugby ground in Jedburgh, the music event saw a dazzling array of talented bands offering something for everyone, young and old.

More importantly, it was a fantastic opportunity to show the local community that UNISON is not only there for them at work!

Roxanne Black, assistant branch secretary said: "We look long and hard, far and wide for social community events for the



branch to support and Riverside Rock was the perfect opportunity.

"We are a large branch covering the entirety of the Scottish Borders and represent thousands of members working in local government, voluntary organisations and the NHS.

"To get involved with a major community event like this was a no-brainer.

"Not only were we able to highlight our services to existing members, it also gave us an opportunity to engage with the local community and promote our union in a very positive way.

"This is the kind of event which brings a lot of joy to the Scottish Borders, and the branch was happy to add our name to the event," she added.



Shop stewards are the heartbeat of the union and the front line in the resistance. They need to be trained and confident." JIM MAIN

branch and has trained 26 new reps this year - and recruited over 1,000 new members.

Helen Ann Hawkins, a nurse working for Lanarkshire Health,



Helen Ann Hawkins



Margo Cranmer

told delegates: "I'm pretty sure you can all relate to the straightforward case that unravels before you", but as a steward you are just expected to get on with it.

"That shouldn't be the answer."

That's why Lanarkshire Health Branch has set up a buddy mentor system where more senior stewards support new stewards.

In a separate motion, Lanarkshire Health's Margo Cranmer said UNISON must put support mechanisms in place for stewards dealing with stressful and complex situations.

She spoke of her experience in supporting a member who then went missing,

"Had it not been for our branch chairperson I don't know how I would have coped", said Margo.

"The nursing director also called me offering support and called me when she received news that the member had been found safe and well.

"However, if that member had harmed himself I don't know how I would have coped with that."

That kind of issue can place a heavy burden on activists, leading to burnout.

Fair funding to support branches

After a very tense and close debate which then went to a card vote, Conference narrowly agreed the report "Gateway to the Future: Stable and Sustainable Funding" as the way forward to best use UNISON resources to the benefit of members.

Delegates voted for the 'Activity Based Budget' option rather than a blanket switch of funds from HQ to branches.

Activity based budgeting allows branches to quickly demonstrate the need for additional resources as it allows the Region to know, before the crisis happens, that it needs to provide additional support, including additional branch funds.

Scotland ran the initial pilots and consultation with branches had resulted in no adverse comments.

Scotland Delegate Stephen Smellie, who was a member of the Branch Resources Review Group along with Scotland's Davena Rankin and Jane Carolan, told Conference that as a branch secretary he wants adequate levels of funding to recruit organise and fight the employers, but also wants this funding to be sustainable.

Stephen said: "I also want other UNISON branches to be equally adequately and sustainably funded. If my sisters and brothers are weakened I am also weakened. So we need to have regard to the needs of all branches."

Scotland NEC member Jane Carolan also supported the recommendations telling delegates that this will get the money to the branches that need it.

INTERNATIONAL Backing peace in Colombia

Colombia remains an extremely dangerous place to live for anyone who defends civil, human and workers' rights.

That was the message from Scotland delegate Lilian Macer who moved a composite of motions from Scotland and Lanarkshire Health amongst others.

UNISON will continue to work with Justice for Colombia and to press the Colombian authorities "to end the culture of impunity" and provide effective protection for all individuals at risk.

Palestine

Conference reiterated its support for a campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) in support of a call from the Palestinian people for an end to repression and the right to self determination.

It will campaign for the repeal of laws like that planned by the Tory government to silence support for Palestinian rights.

Aberdeenshire's Kate Ramsden spoke movingly of a meeting with a young woman from Palestine.

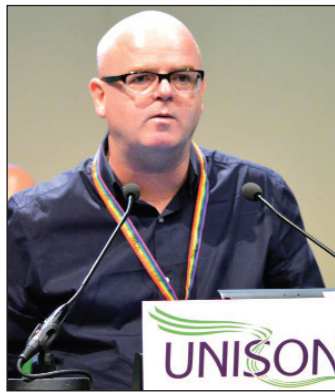
"Her description of day to day life showed graphically the levels of insecurity and uncertainty that ordinary Palestinians live with day in and day out. This is state terrorism - nothing more and nothing less."

Privatised electricity not fit for purpose

UNISON will step up the campaign to bring the energy industry back into public ownership and urge the Labour Party to make it one of its key commitments.

Willie Docherty, moving the Scottish Electricity motion, told delegates: "Since 1979 successive UK governments have pursued marketisation and privatisation of the energy sector with potentially disastrous consequences.

"Short-term profit considerations and private appropriation of energy



Willie Docherty

resources have prevailed over the long view and a more general public interest."

Long-term infrastructural

issues are not being addressed, current policies produce massive inequalities and wealthy elites reap large dividends while fuel poverty has increased dramatically in the past decade.

"Strategic energy resources are now largely in the hands of foreign companies (some state owned) making it difficult for Scottish and UK governments to control", said Willie.

But there is an alternative. Most successful countries developing renewable energy (Denmark and Germany) have used renewed forms of public

ownership and state intervention rather than market-based solutions.

"Resources should be commonly owned to benefit the whole of society rather than vested interests; geared to social need rather than private economic return", added Willie.

He called for a clear focus on energy efficiency with measures to tackle hard-to-heat homes.

"Existing energy policy, predicated on market led and privatised solutions, is not fit for purpose" added Willie.

Huge support for Corbyn at Conference



Photo: Kenny McCallum

Standing ovations at UNISON Conference are rare and only tend to follow outstanding speeches. Jeremy Corbyn was the exception. He got one for merely walking into the Conference hall.

He told UNISON delegates that a Labour government would immediately repeal the Trade Union Act.

Jeremy particularly praised union reps, branch secretaries and lay officials "who work day-in, day-out, representing people in the workplace who otherwise would not get it.

"Public services only operate because of the efficiency and effectiveness of our members and their generosity to go beyond the call of duty, day-in and day-out."

And belying some of the flak that has come his way about the EU referendum (which was the day after) he called on delegates to vote to remain, stressing the future of the NHS, the threat of the TTIP trade deal, environmental standards and climate change as key reasons.

He condemned the government's cuts: "Austerity is a political choice not an economic necessity," he said. "The government freezes pay and cuts jobs, but doesn't seem to understand the consequences."

Changes to state pension hit women hardest

The new single tier pension introduced in April is discriminatory towards women as most cannot accrue the same pension as men because of low pay, part-time working, zero hours contracts and time off for caring responsibilities.



Elizabeth Rankin

Women born between April 1951 and April 1953 will not receive a state pension at all, despite men born in the same period being eligible.

Elizabeth Rankin, NHS Glasgow and Clyde and CVS Branch, in her first speech to conference, slammed the inequity.

She told delegates that she retired after 38 years in nursing. She said: "I made this decision because my state pension age was 63. Yep, I could do this, work part-time to top up my pension till that kicked in.

"Then the goal posts moved. It is now 65 and a half.

But, said Elizabeth, her body doesn't want to work another thirty months. "My back can't do it. My knees can't do it. That was why we could retire at 55 in the first place.

"Give us some dignity, stop moving the goal posts and give my knees a rest!"

Co-ordinated action key to pay justice

by Kate Ramsden
Comms & Campaigns Ctee

Conference voted to co-ordinate the fight for pay justice, decent living standards and the "real" living wage across the whole union linked with UNISON's opposition to austerity and defence of public services.

UNISON pledged to continue to highlight falling living standards as a result of the Tory government's attack on welfare benefits and will campaign on equal pay, and workplace issues such as an end to zero hours contracts and staff shortages.

Scottish convener Lilian Macer brought a Scottish perspective to

the debate highlighting the launch in Scotland by the Fair Work Convention of a framework for fair work that balances the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers for the benefit of all.

Lilian, who represents UNISON Scotland and the STUC on the Convention, highlighted the positive and progressive work in Scotland which involves unions, employers and the Scottish Government.

"We have seen and heard evidence that fair work can deliver clear benefits for individuals alongside higher productivity, performance and innovation for employers.



Lilian Macer

"We believe that fair work is work that offers workers an effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect."

In the same debate, Conference backed a call for the union to campaign for a minimum

wage of £10 per hour.

Dundee City's Jim McFarlane said, "We should never accept the argument of the Tories and our employers that there is no money for decent pay when there are billions for bankers and big business,

billions for nuclear weapons and war."

He called on the union to campaign to raise the living standards of us all. "Our communities, our service users and our members deserve nothing less."

Conference backs Scotland strategy for organising in voluntary sector

by Watty Gaffney
Communications & Campaigns Ctee

Success in Scotland's Organising for Growth Strategy will inform a UK wide approach to recruiting, organising and bargaining in the Community and Voluntary Sector as conference yesterday backed a Scotland motion to make this a key priority for UNISON.

The community and voluntary sector is a growing part of the delivery of public services and many employers have little track record or culture of dealing with trade unions.

Moving the motion, Stephen Smellie, deputy Scottish

convener said: "We have known for years the challenge of recruiting and organising in the community and voluntary sector, but it is not easy.

"Branches struggle with facility time to recruit, organise and even to represent members."

Employees often suffer from poor terms and conditions of employment as well as far from acceptable standards of dignity at work, and poor health and safety standards.

Stephen added: "These organisations are at forefront of austerity cuts in funding and are under pressure.

"In approaching them we sought areas where they could save money such as absence



Stephen Smellie

rates, agency costs, the cost of disciplinary and grievance culture, and legal costs when we take them to tribunals and win.

"We have been relentless in pursuing the management and board members, and working closely with members on these issues."

Stephen added, "In one

charity, members had no pay rise for ten years, we secured an agreed job evaluation which resulted in 81% of staff getting a rise and low paid workers received a 34% pay rise.

"Our Organising and Growth strategy has achieved real improvements for members' terms and conditions and pay, and as hoped for, an increase in recruitment in all five targeted areas."

Stephen urged conference to make recruiting in, organising with and delivering for workers in the community and voluntary sector a UNISON priority, and to develop a UK wide approach to recruiting, organising and bargaining, based on the success of the Scottish model.

Black members walk the walk against austerity



Conference heard that austerity has had a disproportionate impact on Black people so it is imperative they are at the front of campaigns against cuts.

And that should mean real action as Lothian Health's Rakiya Suleiman told delegates: "We are not just going to talk the talk against austerity, we will walk the walk!"

'Incapability' must not be used to sack

Conference condemned the growing use of Incapability Procedures to sack staff on the grounds of ill-health or performance, as part of the cuts agenda.

Backing a South Lanarkshire Branch motion, the union will now do research and produce guidance for branches on best practice to support members in the workplace and challenge abuses of these procedures.

Moving the motion, Tony Slaven told delegates that the



Tony Slaven

law is on our side through the Equalities Act 2010 and the key to challenging such abuses is "reasonable adjustments."

"Because we are dealing here

mostly with vulnerable people - the disabled - me.

"People that have drifted into long term absence because they know that coming back to work under existing circumstances will result in yet another absence," Tony said.

"Concerns about performance should be managed. Incapability dismissals should not be used to do an end run around the disciplinary procedures or any performance support initiatives."

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE

Reports by Kate Ramsden, Marie Quigley and John Stevenson

Stress and overwork must be tackled

UNISON Scotland's Scott Donohoe called on Conference to recognise the massive impact that stress and overwork has on members and to adopt measures to support members and activists.

"Our members are experiencing intolerable increases in workloads, staffing levels are cut to the bone and morale is at rock bottom", he said.

Conference backed Scotland's motion and pledged resources to help support branch activists, including additional training and development and campaigning materials and to campaign for robust and effective workload management schemes.

Housing Forum reinstated

Delegates called on the Union to campaign against the Tory government's housing strategy, to press for socially progressive housing policies and to reinstate the National Housing Forum.

Edinburgh's Duncan Smith, himself a housing worker, highlighted the importance of good housing for good health, children's development and all round well-being.

"In Edinburgh, with the help of tenants we were able to beat back privatisation," he said, to applause.

Duncan added: "Although we have some progressive housing legislation in Scotland there are homeless people on the streets of Edinburgh just like here in Brighton."

Protect youth work with young people

Conference supported a campaign to protect vital youth work services which have been devastated in recent years and are seen as an easy target for councils looking to make cuts.

Aberdeenshire's Kate Ramsden told delegates that she particularly wanted to support the amendment because it called on us in UNISON to work with young people themselves to protect services.

Kate said: "Young people's voices are not only powerful, it is empowering for young people to be able to speak out and to be listened to."

We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories. John Stevenson (Editor) 0131 558 7488, john.stevenson@unison-edinburgh.org.uk

Proud of UNISON at Pride

by Elaine Duffy

Scottish LGBT Committee

The Scottish LGBT Committee attended Pride in Edinburgh on 2 July where we were joined by members from Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Fife, Glasgow, and Inverness.

Our stall was a huge success and we spoke to members and public about the importance of being in a union, the fight against austerity, racism and LGBTI issues.

We talked about the EU referendum and what it could mean for equality.

We recruited new members and we gave a very positive image of our work.



Fun at the UNISON stall at Edinburgh Pride

Our literature on the "No to pink washing" campaign was a great talking point and as one Jewish man told us: "I am so glad to finally see someone telling the truth about Israel."

He told us real stories

about the reality of being a gay man living in Tel Aviv. Very moving.

It was the biggest event in years and we heard some great speakers.

We stood in solidarity with the family of Jo Cox, the victims of

Orlando and held a minute silence then a minute of noise for all victims of homophobic, biphobic, transphobic and all hate crimes.

Very very proud to be a UNISON member that day.

People Power film festival returns to key Scottish cities

Take One Action, the UK's leading global change film festival, returns to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness this autumn, bringing some of the most acclaimed films of the year about the big issues of our time, from climate change to workers' rights.

The festivals will take place 14-25 September in Edinburgh and Glasgow (various venues), 11-13 November in Aberdeen (Belmont Filmhouse) and 18-20 in Inverness (Eden Court). See more details on the UNISON Scotland website or at www.takeoneaction.org.uk

UNISON brings hope to refugees

In a moving debate, local government delegates made it clear that UNISON welcomes refugees and will take steps to ensure that support services for resettlement in the UK are properly resourced and staff are well trained and supported.

Delegates emphatically rejected the anti immigration rhetoric which has featured heavily in the EU referendum.

Glasgow's Norah Adeyemo described how she had visited the 'jungle' in Calais on behalf of the union to deliver supplies and was confronted by appalling conditions.

"People are living in

deplorable conditions. Tent after tent infested with rats, with no running water, set in stinking, infected mud."

She spoke to refugees who asked: "Where is the humanity in Europe?"

Norah said: "I was proud to be able to tell them that thousands of ordinary UNISON members along with other anti-racist organisations are marching and demonstrating in support of refugees." They said: "You've given us hope."



Norah Adeyemo

Renew fight against council cuts

Local Government Conference slammed the Tory Government's ideological austerity policies which are having such a devastating effect on local democracy and public services. It pledged to continue the fight to oppose these attacks.

Scotland's motion was included in a wide-ranging composite moved by Inez Teece.

She told delegates: "Criticism is heaped onto services when they inevitably fail in their desired aims, criticised for not having marvellous services with bells and whistles, whilst at the same time being given funding



Inez Teece

for a teddy bears picnic."

She asked, "When failures happen, what do we do? Do we look at how we fund the services and how we provide them? No! We censure the staff, we reorganise and we sell off those services to private and voluntary agencies but this time with even smaller budgets."

Moving testimony as UNISON pledges fight against poverty

by Marie Quigley

North Lanarkshire

The first motion at National Delegate Conference prompted moving testimony from delegates highlighting the growing issue of poverty among members.

Conference went on to pledge to keep poverty at the centre of UNISON's agenda and to continue its anti-poverty work



Kate Ramsden

across the union and across the four governments.

Supporting the motion, Aberdeenshire's Kate Ramsden told conference that since 2010, like many in the hall, she had been pointing out to anyone who'll listen - and some who won't - the growing gap between the rich and the rest of us.

Kate slammed the "increasing numbers of children growing up in poverty, most of whose parents work."

"This government goes on

about making work pay. Well make it pay, I want to shout to them: don't cut benefits - pay decent wages. It's not rocket science, stupid!"

"Instead we see the demonisation of the poor, the disabled and the vulnerable into the deserving and undeserving, setting neighbour against neighbour in the oldest trick in the book - divide and rule".