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PUBLIC WORKS:
November 2019 No 140

Scotland *in* UNISON

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

Milestone reached for Malawi maternity clinic

NEW FUNDING PUSH AS AGREEMENT REACHED TO BUILD MUCH NEEDED UNISON SCOTLAND CLINIC

Past UNISON president Gordon McKay's project to build a maternity clinic in Malawi reached an important milestone on 27 September as UNISON's Wilma Brown signed a memorandum of understanding to allow building to start.

UNISON Scotland members have been key to the year of fundraising that led to the signing of the memorandum with the district commissioner and district health officer - an event described by UNISON Scotland communications officer Danny Phillips as "an emotional moment" as he praised "the amazing work of Wilma Brown."

Wilma added: "Thanks to the amazing generosity of UNISON regions, branches, members, and sponsors over the past year, we have almost raised the money we need to build a UNISON Scotland Clinic for mothers and babies in Zomba, Malawi."

More funding needed

But to make the whole project a reality, more fundraising will be needed and information on how you can help will follow in the next few weeks.

Wilma gave *SiU* a rundown of how we got to this significant milestone.

She said: "UNISON Scotland, and in particular the Scottish Health Committee, were extremely proud when Gordon McKay (Ayrshire and Arran Health Branch) was elected as UNISON president for 2018-19. We all understood what a momentous achievement this was for him and we wanted to offer our support in whatever way we could."

By tradition, UNISON presidents nominate a charity to be supported in their presidential year. When Gordon chose the Machinjiri Clinic Wilma said: "He knew he could count on us to get right behind him."

"In true UNISON style we formed a wee fundraising committee and I was volunteered as chair. I think that meant if it didn't raise enough money then I



Wilma Brown (centre) brought football strips and sports gear on her visit to Mapolo school donated by the Cottage Family Centre in Fife (originally given by Briggs Marine) and a UNISON member.

would get the blame!"

Gordon, a health worker himself, chose this charity because the clinic, from which the care for the women and babies was delivered, was in a very poor state and miles from the bigger hospitals. The staff at Machinjiri Clinic were doing their very best in a very challenging environment.

Malawi's health sector is resource poor and increasingly overstretched by a growing population. Two out of every 100 women die from preventable maternal causes during their reproductive lifetime. This

maternal mortality rate is one of the highest in the world.

"We got straight on it", said Wilma: "Fundraising activities were planned immediately. A race night was organised the night before UNISON Scottish Council 2018. All Scottish branches were invited and we hoped to raise a fair bit of money.

£4,000 raised in one night

"The support from branches for the race night was fantastic, lots of raffle prizes were donated, we had a tombola stand and of course the races themselves. We raised

over £4,000 in one night."

"Danny Phillips came along and highlighted, through his work in Zomba, just how big the problem was. This spurred everyone on and by the end of the night we were talking about building a new clinic and providing the facilities required to deliver the care the women and babies so deserved.

"We worked hard raising more money selling cakes, quiz nights, donations etc... it went on. I was almost begging folks for money to make this happen", added Wilma.

In April 2019 Gordon McKay, Danny Phillips, Mark Beacon, UNISON international officer, and Wilma went out to Zomba to engage with the staff and local villagers there to understand what they needed from UNISON.

Their clinic, not ours

"This was their clinic, not ours", stressed Wilma. "It was important to discuss with the health authorities that what we wanted to do was in line with their own health strategy.

"This was an eye opening visit and the level of deprivation was plain to see. These are the poorest people I have ever encountered but they were so welcoming, happy and delighted to meet us.

"Once we had had a good look around and noted the very poor state of the clinic, we knew that what we set out to do must be achieved."

After the visit, Gordon said: "I'm extremely grateful for the way in which UNISON members have supported the president's appeal. I am genuinely moved, especially now I have seen the difference it will make to very poor people who live in the fourth poorest nation on earth."

The memorandum of understanding agreed staged payments at three levels. "This gives us a wee bit of time for a final push on the fundraising", added Wilma.

Queen Margaret University staff vote for strike action

UNISON members voted for strike action - by 100% in a 75% turn-out - in a bid to keep Edinburgh's Queen Margaret University as their employer.

The members who voted are campus operations staff, including supervisors, security officers, facilities assistants and members of the grounds team.

They are at risk of seeing their jobs outsourced as the university finalises a tendering exercise covering the whole ancillary workforce, some of whose work is already contracted out to

private companies.

Commenting on the ballot result, UNISON Scotland head of higher education Lorcan Mullen said: "UNISON members in this department have shown clearly they will strike to stay in direct employment - they know and the union knows what outsourcing means for support services workers.

"The 100% yes vote on a strong turnout in a short-run ballot shows considerable resolve and unity.

"To protect our members, safeguard safety-critical services

'The 100% yes vote on a strong turnout in a short-run ballot shows considerable resolve and unity'
LORCAN MULLEN

to students and to avoid damaging industrial action, I call on the university's leadership to rule out further outsourcing at the earliest opportunity."

Higher education members



across the UK are taking part in an industrial action ballot over pay. The ballot closes on 30 October in England, Scotland and Wales, and on 5 November in Northern Ireland.

UNISON Scotland - Influencing the political agenda

By Stephen Smellie
Depute Scottish Convener

Political decisions affect the working lives of every UNISON member and so the union seeks to influence these decisions whether that be regarding Brexit, tackling the climate emergency or funding for our services.

In Scotland the political scene

is a diverse one with five parties able to influence the policies of the Scottish Government.

Therefore, contrary to the common view that UNISON only works with the Labour Party, UNISON Scotland engages with and tries to influence the policies of all political parties.

UNISON Scotland was therefore present at the recent SNP and Scottish Green Party conferences

talking to delegates, MSPs and MPs, speaking at fringe meetings and even on the platform at the Scottish Green conference.

The main issue that was being raised was the need for services to be funded properly and in particular that local authorities are funded at a level necessary to allow them to maintain and improve services but also to tackle the many social issues in

the community and make a real contribution to the climate emergency.

Real council spending has been cut year on year since the financial crash in 2008 and services and jobs have taken the strain.

UNISON Scotland's recently commissioned report from the Jimmy Reid Foundation detailed the various ways in which

Council funding could be changed in order to give more cash at local level. This featured heavily in the discussions at the two conferences.

Scottish Secretary Mike Kirby was joined by Convener Lilian Macer at the SNP conference and Depute Convener Stephen Smellie at the Greens along with members of our Bargaining and Campaigns Team.

UNISON AT THE GREENS CONFERENCE Leading the way on climate change



Stephen Smellie (right) at the Green Party fringe

UNISON was a high-profile participant in and around the Scottish Green Party Conference in Inverness in October.

As well as successfully lobbying delegates and MSPs about the need for increased funding for local councils UNISON Scotland's depute convener Stephen Smellie took part in a fringe meeting alongside the party's co-leader Lorna Slater discussing what needs to be done to address the climate emergency.

He was also invited to speak to the full conference in a session launching the party's Scottish Green New Deal alongside Patrick Harvie, the other co-Leader.

Stephen, welcoming the policy,

spoke of UNISON's leading role in the trade union movement in raising the issues around climate change and called for a transformed economy to ensure a Just Transition to a low carbon economy. He highlighted the crucial role that councils can play, if they are properly funded.

After the conference Stephen said: "The Scottish Greens have been very influential in the Scottish Parliament, particularly in relation to influencing the budget discussions, securing additional funds for councils and a commitment to review the funding settlement. Building links with them and influencing them is the right thing to do and we did it very successfully in Inverness."

UNISON AT THE SNP CONFERENCE

Calling for a raise in women's pay to reduce the gender pay gap

UNISON Scotland convener, Lilian Macer, joined Chris Stephens MP, Professor Keith Ewing and Dee Flanagan from Thompson's Solicitors at an SNP conference fringe in October on the Institute of Employment Rights Workers' Rights Charter.

Lilian focussed on women's equality and told the fringe that working women have waited far too long to get fairness in pay and equality at work.

"Fifty years on from the Equal Pay Act, it is an injustice that women in Scotland continue to suffer a gender pay gap of 15%," slammed Lilian.

"It is therefore both necessary and just that we campaign to ensure the mandatory publication of Action Plans that make a real difference in eradicating this appalling injustice."

She supported a Gender Pay Gap Action Plan that considers all aspects of the world of work from pre-employment to retirement, the role of education and skills, employment support services, and social security.

However she warned that this

'Fifty years on from the Equal Pay Act, it is an injustice that women in Scotland continue to suffer a gender pay gap of 15%'

LILIAN MACER

on its own will not be enough to address the years of gender discrimination, calling for action to address the imbalances of power which mean that women continue to be discriminated against.

She pointed to the Fair Work Convention Social Care Inquiry which identified that there is a workforce of over 200,000, 83% of them women, predominantly low paid, part time in precarious employment contracts with no power, influence or control within their jobs.

"The sad reality is that women remain heavily over-represented in occupations which tend to be lower paid and undervalued. More than one in three women work in low-paid occupations, such as cleaning, catering, admin, retail and care,



compared to one in five men," said Lilian.

She called on the Scottish Government to radically overhaul the commissioning strategies within the Integrated Joint Boards to place Fair Work at the centre and to give the workers a voice by establishing collective bargaining arrangements with employers and trade unions.

"Closing the gap must involve increasing the pay of low-paid, female-dominated, occupations such as carers, cleaners, clerical workers, and catering assistants.

"It is a simple point but it is one that gets too little attention in the debate around equal pay. Raising women's pay reduces the pay gap."

UNISON Labour Link nominates prospective MPs and six of the seven so far are women

UNISON Scotland Labour Link is gearing up for a General Election and has begun to nominate candidates for constituencies across Scotland.

So far seven UNISON candidates have been selected over and above Lesley Laird and Danielle Rowley, our two sitting MPs. Of those seven, we are delighted to report that six are women.

ALISON MACCORQUODALE, Western Isles, is secretary of UNISON Western Isles Local Government Branch. She told *SiU*: "I've been standing up for my colleagues for years as a UNISON activist and I believe my skills and experience, together with what the Labour Party will deliver, will ensure a positive future for the people of the Western Isles."



PAM DUNCAN-GLANCY, Glasgow North, said: "I use my voice to stand up for human rights and for the NHS where I work - because we need to fight for our rights and our public services. People thought I wouldn't be able



to stand up by myself, so I've made it my business to stand up for the many. I'm asking the people of Glasgow North to give me the chance to stand up for them, in Parliament."

WENDY MILNE, Falkirk East, said: "As a frontline worker I have witnessed first-hand the impact of austerity and cuts to public services. Austerity has worked against the poorest in society and has cut the most vital public services.



"I am proud of Labour's vision of a more equal society providing employment and hope, decent affordable housing and funding good quality public services."

FATEN HAMEED, Glasgow Central, said: "I hold this city in my heart as it provided me with a safe haven that myself and other individuals needed. It has granted me with passion and strength to allow me to fight for fairness, equality and justice. Through all my years working for the local government, I was a proud member of UNISON. UNISON to me is the guaranteed



support to every worker in order to achieve fairness in the work environment as well as campaigning for equality at the workplace and beyond."

ANGELA FEENEY, Motherwell and Wishaw, said: "I have lived, worked and raised my family in the constituency my full life. I work as an NHS podiatrist and have the absolute privilege of being a councillor for Wishaw. I believe the trade union and labour movement should work hand in hand. Motherwell and Wishaw deserve an MP who is grounded and understands all the problems and challenges that they face on a daily basis."



KATE RAMSDEN, standing in Gordon, said: "I have a vision of the kind of country I want to live in - one that is fairer and more equal, where children don't have to grow up in poverty and where public services are valued and properly funded.



"This vision is consistent with Labour's manifesto which is informed by many of the policies of our union. That's why I'm

standing for election as a Labour Party candidate."

KEVIN MCGREGOR, Kilmarnock and Loudoun, said: "Kilmarnock and Loudoun needs a progressive voice in parliament pushing to protect workers rights and pursue social justice. As a UNISON activist I see more than ever how we need to stand up for our trade union members and colleagues as rights are challenged, terms and conditions are stripped away, vital industries disappear and families end up on the scrap heap. Real change for the many can only happen with a Labour Government and the power of the trade unions.



• *UNISON members can choose to pay into the Labour Link political fund or the non-affiliated Campaign Fund or both or neither.*

We know from past elections that UNISON members will also be standing for other parties, though obviously not through the UNISON Labour Link. That will include long-time UNISON activist Chris Stephens MP, standing again for the SNP in Glasgow South West.

Branches celebrate unsung local service champions

UNISON calls them the UK's 'local service champions', the people at the frontline of vital council services who take care of so many aspects of our lives – from the routine to the lifesaving.

Sadly, many of these local government members are not given the credit they deserve for their hard work and dedication in providing vital local services, helping vulnerable people and keeping our communities running.

That's why UNISON has launched its Local Services Champions campaign, to help show the public the difference our members make every day.

Thursday 17 October was designated as Local Service Champions Day and Aberdeen City Branch went all out to celebrate their local service champions in Aberdeen City Council.

They hired a bus to do the rounds of Aberdeen City Council offices and services and held stalls with cake and goodie bags at key offices.

The tour started off with a send off from Aberdeen Provost Barney Crockett at Marischal College, the council headquarters with branch secretary Kenny Luke along with other branch officers and UNISON staff local organiser Ann McEvoy and area organiser Susan Kennedy.



Kenny Luke with Aberdeen's local service champions' bus and goodie bags; recruitment in East Ayrshire; and cupcakes in Stornoway.

Kenny said: "As a union we feel it's important to celebrate champions of local government and thank them for the work they do.

"These staff work hard every day for the council and the people of Aberdeen. Everyone is important and every team does vital work. With finances getting tighter and tighter we feel it's important to thank them."

Staff at each location were



happy to have their work recognised and that their trade union UNISON was helping to make the public aware of the importance of the services they provide.

East Ayrshire Branch spent the day expressing gratitude for public service workers,

welcoming existing members and getting new members to join UNISON

Western Isles Branch had a stall in the Stornoway council building to allow members to chat with stewards and grab a treat, including local service champion cupcakes.

Historic meetings of new Scotland FE Branch

Members turned out in droves, in person or through video conferencing, to be part of the historic inaugural general meetings of the 2,688 strong UNISON Scotland Further Education Branch in October.

Historically, FE colleges were under local councils until 1993 when they became independent bodies funded by central government. However, UNISON members remained in local government branches.

The achievement of national bargaining for most FE colleges in 2015 set the scene for the move to the new FE branch. At this stage Orkney and Shetland are not yet included as they remain under local authority conditions.

Chris Greenshields (Kelvin College) was elected as the first branch secretary, and Collette Bradley (New College, Lanarkshire) was elected chair.

Chris Greenshields said, "This is the culmination of a great deal of work over a number of years to make the case for FE members in Scotland to have their own branch.

"We are delighted that



FE members meet for the first time as their own branch

UNISON Scotland supported us as we believe that this will provide better representation within the UNISON structures for our members in FE in Scotland."

The branch will have delegates to the Scottish and UK Local Government Conferences and UK National Delegate Conference. As a sector, FE will retain seats on Scottish Standing Committees (Scottish Committee, Health & Safety, Learning and Organising etc.)

Job Evaluation

2019 has seen the completion by support staff across 21 colleges of an individual job evaluation questionnaire.

UNISON had six activists released on full time facility time during that period to assist the process. Hundreds of new members joined.

UNISON will have 10 panellists sitting on joint national scoring panels from November. A joint pay and grading working group, in

We believe this will provide better representation within the UNISON structures for our members in FE'
CHRIS GREENSHIELDS

parallel, will consider possible grading models for retrospective implementation with effect from 1 September 2018. The Scottish Government is providing around £12 million revenue resource for the negotiations.

Union seats on boards

The Scottish Government will this winter institute the necessary regulations to introduce trade unions seats on college boards with effect from 1 September 2020.

There will be one for teaching union EIS/ FELA and one for support staff unions, UNISON, UNITE, GMB. This will be in addition to the pre-existing staff seats.

GLASGOW EQUAL PAY Unity needed now more than ever

Glasgow City Branch has issued a statement to clarify and correct issues raised in a recent BBC Disclosure programme.

The statement on social media says: "The joint working arrangements between the four legal teams secured more money overall out of the council for claimants regardless of who their lawyer was.

"UNISON's lawyers have repeatedly stated that they are very confident that our members gained higher pay-outs with this approach. In fact, every claimant, from every group was better off as a result.

"Joint working and parity were demands made on the union lawyers by the members. Parity for claimants was one of the five strike demands in October last year and was referred to in UNISON communications prior to the strike. Parity means that workers were compensated consistently according to the value of their claim.

"We are conscious that some claimants are limited to five years compensation because their claims were made towards the end of the compensation period. The individualistic, five year equal pay claim rule is an anti-worker, pro-employer law that should be abolished. However at the moment that is the UK law and nothing can be done by a local trade union branch or any lawyer about that fact.

"That doesn't alter the key fact - the law must change to guarantee full compensation for women with no five year limit. UNISON has always campaigned to change equal pay law and we will escalate that campaign.

"By way of context, UNISON communications started with an individual letter to all members' homes in 2010, followed by further ones in 2012 and 2016. There were also workplace briefings, e-mails, posters and adverts in UNISON magazines.

"The BBC show will not deflect us from the other challenges the membership face – and the main focus now is job evaluation and the pay review.

"We need the unity of the last two years more now than ever."

UNISON Scotland Housing Conference 22 November 'SCOTLAND'S HOMELESSNESS CRISIS'

UNISON Scotland's Housing Issues Group (SHIG) is organising this free event in Glasgow on Friday 22 November for branches across Scotland that cover members working in housing services.

The theme is Scotland's Homelessness Crisis and speakers so far include Shelter Scotland, Poverty Alliance, and Living Rent. More speakers are yet to be added.

The event will be held in UNISON Glasgow City Branch office from 10 until 3. The event is free and a buffet lunch will be provided. Branches will need to cover any other expenses.

Delegate nominations should be sent to h.scott@unison.co.uk

Wear Red Day stands up against racism

Show Racism the Red Card held its fifth Scottish Wear Red Day on Friday 4 October.

UNISON Scotland has long supported the campaign as a great chance to get involved in spreading the message of anti-racism and stand in solidarity.

UNISON branches and activists across Scotland and beyond wore red to highlight

their anti-racist message.

Stewards and resource centre staff at Queen Elizabeth University Hospital wore red to promote Show Racism the Red Card, on Wear Red Day.

Watty Gaffney, of NHS Glasgow, Clyde and CVS branch said, "We must educate against racism throughout society in the United Kingdom. There is No Place for Hate"

NEC members Stephen Smellie and Kate Ramsden didn't let the small matter of being abroad on holiday get in the way, posting pictures from Italy and Spain respectively.

Disabled members including Scotland's Kathleen Kennedy took time out of their National Disabled Members' meeting to show racism the red card.



Recording still a problem as report shows level of violence to workers

Violent incidents are still a problem for staff across public services. That's the unavoidable conclusion of UNISON Scotland annual survey.

The results of this year's survey were that a total of 37,662 assaults had been reported in the most last year.

Assaults on local government workers account for 55% of this total – an aggregate of 20,867.

Health Boards reported a total of 14,714 assaults on NHS workers in their latest annual returns. At face value this marks decrease on last year of some 3,000 assaults.

This doesn't necessarily

mean that things are getting better. It may well just mean that incidents aren't being reported.

The flip side of this is a rise in reported incidents can actually show success – as it can be a result of campaigning work to get staff to report incidents and employers to record them.

Scott Donohoe, chair of UNISON Scotland's Health & Safety Committee, said: "Non reporting and under reporting remain a serious issue.

"We need to press more employers to sign up to UNISON's Violence at Work Charter and continue to push the message that violence is not 'part of the job'.

"We need more action from

employers and strengthened legislation from the Scottish Government."

UNISON Scotland's Bargaining and Campaigns team have been carrying out this survey using Freedom of Information requests every year since 2006, when the total was around 20,000 – or nearly half of the current total.

The report can't paint a full picture, but can give an idea of what's going on and where more work might be

necessary.

Take this year – the reported incidents in colleges and universities are down to zero in most places. It's easier to believe that's poor record keeping than that everyone has a perfect day every day.

What the report does show beyond is that this is a problem that isn't going away.

UNISON Scotland's Violence at Work Report 2019 is available for download on the UNISON Scotland website.

Assaults on staff employed by public sector employers by year

Survey year	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Loc Govt	20,867	20,208	22,006	17,605	13,206	15,671
Health	14,714	18,225	19,170	17,116	18,636	15,057
Other	2,081	2,135	1,245	6,445	6,437	6,296
Total	37,662	40,568	42,421	41,166	38,279	37,024

How's Yer Heid? How speaking up and seeking help worked for Andy

The last issue of Scotland in UNISON highlighted the Young Member's How's Yer Heid campaign booklet which introduces some basic mindfulness techniques.

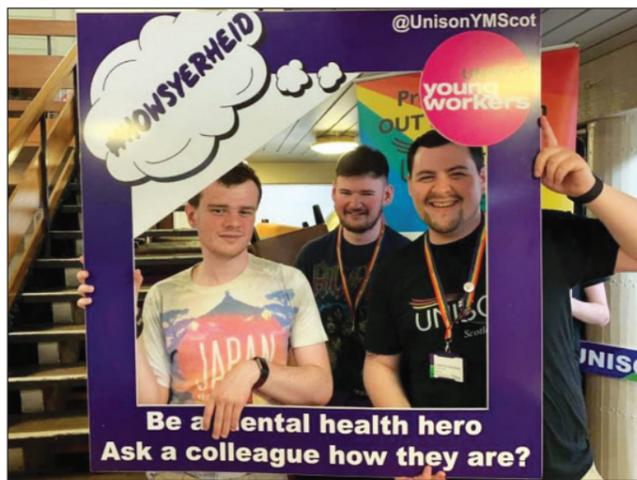
Here SQA Branch equality officer Andy Crosbie shares his own story to describe how various therapies have helped him with anxiety and depression following a close family bereavement back in 2016.

Many of these supports are easily accessible through your workplace and further information can be obtained by contacting your UNISON rep or HR Department.

Andy experienced a close family bereavement in 2016 and coupled with several changes at work started to experience symptoms of stress and anxiety.

Given the culture in the UK about mental health in the workplace he felt reluctant to really talk to others in the workplace about how he was feeling or seek any of the support that was available over fears of feeling identifiable to others.

At first Andy seemed to be perfectly fine, experiencing relief that the family member



Andy Crosbie (left) with young members promoting their How's Yer Heid campaign

was no longer suffering.

However, one afternoon, three months following the death, Andy and a new start were talking about several general topics. Andy's wellbeing came up as the new start realised that he was struggling a bit.

Andy said: "I managed to feel a bit more encouraged to talk about the situation and was able to open up about everything."

This led to Andy seeking some support. Since then Andy has had a good support network in place with a

number of his immediate team members.

At difficult times such as Christmas he is able to use strategies such as going out for a coffee or a walk so he can talk privately or ad hoc texts and phone calls. He has found this support extremely beneficial.

A few days later Andy phoned the employer's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) with some support from his UNISON rep with note taking on the phone call. The EAP service arranged for Andy to receive a number of counselling sessions from a

local therapist.

Andy added, "Through contacts I have also self-referred to a complementary therapist (provided free of charge through a local charity) and received a number of treatments to relieve some of the physical tension stress can bring.

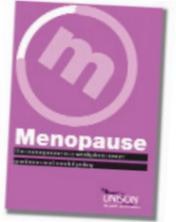
"These treatments include massage and reflexology. The therapies helped reduce pain in the back area, and really supported me to cope with the feeling of "needing to be somewhere" at night by suggesting new ways to pass the time previously spent looking after the family member who died."

A considerable part of this has been focused on art such as painting which Andy has recently taken up using his holiday photographs and photographs of flowers in his local park. Through support and encouragement from friends and family Andy started attending a local art class which has led to him getting work exhibited locally in several exhibitions.

Andy would encourage all UNISON members suffering from mental ill health to speak up and seek help.

Menopause workplace guide launched

UNISON has produced updated guidance aimed at improving workplace conditions for employees who are experiencing the menopause.



The launch marked

World Menopause Day on 18 October and followed a Renfrewshire Branch motion to National Conference in June and the work done by South Lanarkshire Branch in developing the first comprehensive menopause policy in Scotland.

Given that women make up more than 70% of UNISON's 1.3 million members, it's clearly a workplace issue and therefore a union issue that we should be leading the way on.

UNISON assistant general secretary Christina McAnea said: "For too long talking about the menopause has been taboo, subject to jokes about hot flushes and whispers about competence.

"The menopause is most definitely a workplace issue and should be taken more seriously by employers."

The guidance includes a model workplace policy. The union is also developing training on menopause awareness.

See more at www.unison.org.uk/menopause

North Ayrshire branch 'proud' to back pupils' mental health initiative



On Mental Health Awareness Day on 10 October, North Ayrshire UNISON met with the Largs Academy Mental Health Ambassadors.

The young people are creating their own pocket leaflet/information card that will go to every Secondary pupil and Primary 7 children who will be transitioning into secondary education.

The Branch also had the opportunity to share the UNISON's Young Members Mood Manual and have a discussion around this.

Louise McDaid, branch secretary said: "North Ayrshire UNISON has pledged financial support to this important venture and our logo will be incorporated, along with other agencies, on the final production."

Louise added, "Mental Health and Young People within North Ayrshire has been highlighted through recent tragic events and we are proud to work with these young people supporting them in any way we can going forward in reducing the stigma often associated with mental ill health."

We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories. Contact Kate Ramsden (editor) katearamsden@gmail.com, Danny Phillips d.phillips@unison.co.uk, Trisha Hamilton t.hamilton@unison.co.uk

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