



**Welcome to this UNISON News update for members working in education in NI. It includes essential information on:**

- the new NJC Pay Offer;
- all you need to know for a safe return to work – including links to important health & safety resources;
- updates on our UNISON College Education & Training Programme and our welfare support charity, There for You.



You will also find information on how you and a friend can win £100 each by entering our 'Recruit a Friend' Prize Draw. See full details on Page 8.

## NJC Pay Offer to go to members

Consultation will allow branches and members to discuss the employers' final offer

In July, UNISON members in education and local government who are on contracted NJC terms and conditions will be asked to decide whether to accept or reject the employers' final offer of 2.75%. This is the best that can be achieved by negotiation.

The final pay offer includes:

- a 2.75% pay increase;
- a one-day increase in the Green Book minimum level of annual leave. This would represent an increase from 21 days to 22 days per annum and would not impact on the entitlement for those with more than 5 years' service.
- joint work on mental health.

It is clear that the offer falls well short of what members need and deserve. However, UNISON's NJC Committee believes that we have reached the end of

our discussions with the employers and so this is the best pay offer achievable by negotiation. The committee is not making a recommendation on whether members should accept or reject the pay offer.

In the coming weeks members will receive information on the offer, and will be asked to vote on whether they accept or reject it. For other UNISON members in education settings whose pay is linked to NJC pay (e.g. voluntary grammar schools, integrated schools and Irish medium schools) we will be approaching your employer to raise a claim if this offer is accepted.

Please contact your local UNISON branch or the UNISON regional centre, Belfast

- [www.unison-ni.org.uk/branches](http://www.unison-ni.org.uk/branches)
- [UnisonNorthernIreland@unison.co.uk](mailto:UnisonNorthernIreland@unison.co.uk)
- 02890270190

## Are you facing any problems at the end of school year?

Contact your UNISON branch now if you are facing any of the following issues

- Have you had issues with your pay or annual leave?
- Has there been changes to your contract or post? For example, is your contract being terminated or are your hours being changed?
- Are you facing redundancy or redeployment?

If so, please contact your local UNISON branch - [www.unison-ni.org.uk/branches](http://www.unison-ni.org.uk/branches)

## All you need to know for a safe return to work

On 23 June [New School Day guidance](#) was issued by the Department of Education. It is focused on how to phase staff back into the workplace and supplements any specific guidance and social distancing protocols linked to schools. UNISON will continue to engage with the Department of Education and the Education Authority on the implications for all support service workers.

The Guidance suggests:

- that for the majority of school based staff it may not be feasible to work from home
- 2m social distancing rule would be reduced to 1m between pupils, when schools reopen in September.
- There will be an element of part-time learning due to limitations - such as small classrooms - in some schools
- Primary school pupils should be in school for at least two days a week
- Post-primary schools might be able to return to full-time education if they implement a so-called bubble model
- Post-primary schools that can't do that should have pupils in school at least half the time

- Secondary schools are urged to consider a new model whereby the teacher would move between classes, not the children.
- Children will be prevented from bringing items such as bags into the school setting and taking items out of school at the end of day.
- Pupils will be asked to wash their hands on arrival at schools and at regular intervals throughout the day.



This guidance will be kept under review and updated in line with PHA or NI Executive changes. For the most up to date version of this guidance please go to the Education Authority website ([www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk)). Further specific guidance for special and early years schools is being developed

## New UNISON health and safety advice and guidance for activists and members in the education and early years sectors

As schools, early years and childcare services start to expand UNISON are negotiating with Government and employers to ensure agreement round safe opening, including risk assessments, staff training and clear guidance on safe working practices.

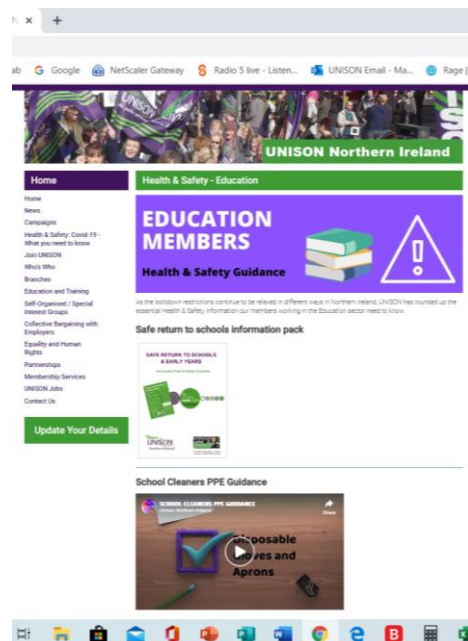
UNISON members in education can't avoid close contact with children, especially young children. They comfort children, give medicines, support children with disabilities, support children in the dining room and playground and classroom. The safety of all is vital and we need to all be properly prepared.

UNISON has produced a range of new health and safety advice and guidance for activists and members in the education and early years sectors, whether you've been working throughout the pandemic or are returning to the workplace now. See the new UNISON guide, 'Safe return to schools & early years – Information pack and safety checklist' at [www.unison-ni.org.uk/health-safety-education](http://www.unison-ni.org.uk/health-safety-education).

### How do I challenge unsafe work?

Where groups of workers, or individuals, wish to challenge unsafe work this is done through a 3 Stage process for keeping people safe:

**Stage 1: Guidance & Dialogue:** Most work arrangements are being addressed and resolved through direct dialogue with employers around existing guidance. However, if you are concerned about the application of the guidance to your workplace you should use the checklist in the UNISON guide, '[Safe return to schools & early years – Information pack](http://www.unison-ni.org.uk/health-safety-education)



The purpose of this pack is to make trade union involvement a reality on the ground for our growing number of members in schools and early years. Staff have skills, they know their jobs. Risk assessments and then action to mitigate risks need to be in place to ensure that children and staff are safe. This is no time for short cuts.

[and safety checklist' at www.unison-ni.org.uk/health-safety-education](http://www.unison-ni.org.uk/health-safety-education). You should also work collectively with colleagues and seek support from your local rep and your UNISON branch.

The Checklist will help you work with your colleagues to ensure that relevant guidance is being followed and your safety needs addressed. This covers use of risk assessments, access to PPE, provision of hand sanitisers, compliance with social distancing and much more. If the Checklist reveals risks that are not resolved through

guidance and dialogue with your line manager you may want to formally challenge. Before progressing you should contact your branch. Wherever possible, work collectively as a group.

**Stage 2: Challenge:** Where the checklist reveals the need for action on safety, and members want to make a complaint, UNISON will formally notify the employer and call for specific action on safety. The notice will explain our concerns (identified using the checklist) and set out your right to safety at work. We will also explain the legal protection you have when raising safety issues. If a formal challenge to unsafe work does not secure improved arrangements, and you relay your concerns to UNISON, we will advise you on the available options at Stage 3.

**Stage 3: Action:** In extreme situations there are legal rules that enable workers to withdraw from unsafe situations. The rules for withdrawing from a work situation are as follows:

- You face a serious danger to your health
- The danger you face is immediate or imminent
- Your belief that you face imminent danger is reasonable
- You have used all available measures to protect yourself and avert the risk to health

Always seek advice first. Use the checklist and the contacts below if you believe you need to withdraw from an unsafe situation.

## Covid19 and your safety rights – A safety checklist for members

Safety Reps have certain legal rights which can really help them make a difference for their members. Safety Reps have unique powers in the battle to keep our members safe. These includes the right to represent members on anything affecting their safety, carry out workplace inspections, and to time off to perform their role.

It is the employer's duty to keep their workers safe, and safety reps have a vital role in holding employers to account. Employers have a legal duty to consult with safety reps on anything affecting their members' safety so reps should be asking employers to see their risk assessment, if they haven't seen them already. Safety Reps also have the right to conduct their own workplace inspections, and in some cases employers and UNISON Safety Reps have worked in partnership to carry out joint inspections and risk assessments.

Most work arrangements are being addressed and resolved through dialogue with employers around existing guidance.

However, if you are concerned about the application of the guidance to your workplace you should use the checklist in 'Safe return to schools & early years – Information pack and safety checklist' to ensure that relevant guidance is being followed. Work collectively with colleagues, and seek support from your branch and the UNISON regional office where required.



## We want to hear from you!

If you have any specific issues you want to make us aware of please email us at [UnisonNorthernIreland@unison.co.uk](mailto:UnisonNorthernIreland@unison.co.uk).

1. **About you.** Tell us your name and your contact details so that we can get in touch if necessary. This will be easier if you provide your mobile number, email, employer, workplace and briefly describe the work that you do.
2. **Tell us any H&S concerns you may have related to your school or facility opening up more widely.** These concerns may range across a wide a variety of issues including:
  - Maintenance of a safe environment
  - Building health and safety checks on issues such as hot and cold water systems; gas and fire safety; kitchen

- equipment; specialist equipment used by pupils
- Cleaning and hygiene arrangements
- Safe movement around the school for staff and children;
- Safe staffing, staff availability and rotas
- Assessed risks to Black and Minority Ethnic staff
- Involvement of respective catering, cleaning, classroom assistants and other support staff in discussions about how meals will be served, staffing levels, safety etc
- Social distancing & PPE arrangements
- Special measures related to SEN provision
- Changes to routines for staff and pupils
- Communication arrangements for staff and parents?
- Managing pupil and staff wellbeing and mental health: Are you satisfied that appropriate measures will be in place when the school begins to open more widely?

## Every school and needs a safety rep - Be on the safe side

UNISON is launching a new 'Be on the **safe** side' health & safety campaign #BeOnTheSafeSide. We are looking to recruit an army of new safety reps to join our many hundreds of accredited reps to make sure public services in NI are Covid Secure.

If you work in education, why not think about becoming a health and safety rep in your school? Never have safety reps been more important. We need to ensure the risks to staff and children are assessed and managed.

You can help keep us all safe by becoming a UNISON health and safety rep. Full training will be available and you will

always have someone to mentor you and talk you through any issues or problems you may have.



Try out our 'Health and Safety 101' sessions over the summer and if you decide to progress to becoming a rep we can offer fully accredited training before you return in September.

Contact UNISON on 02890 270190 for more details

## Useful H&S links

UNISON has produced a range of new health and safety advice and guidance for activists and members, whether they've been working throughout the pandemic or are returning to work now.

See [www.unison-ni.org.uk/health-safety-covid-19-what-you-need-know](http://www.unison-ni.org.uk/health-safety-covid-19-what-you-need-know) for information on how to work safely, risk assessments and

current guidance on social distancing, use of PPE and other resources.

As guidance changes on a regular basis you should also access the Education Authority website [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) and NI Direct website - [www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk) for updates.

## UNISON College – Our Activist and Member Learning Programme

Our Activist and Member Learning Programme continues to be identified by members in education as one of our most important areas of work. Both programmes give support to members and activists especially at a time when employers are cutting back on their training and development programmes.

We offer over 180 workshops for all members across 90 topics such as autism, health & safety, palliative care, resilience, bereavement, communicating effectively, interview skills, drugs and alcohol, epilepsy, Parkinson's, suicide awareness, dealing with challenging behaviour and Makaton. All of our courses are now hosted at [www.unisoncollegeni.org.uk](http://www.unisoncollegeni.org.uk).

If you open it on your phone, you can save the page on your homepage as an app style icon. Just set up an account and once approved - you can book, track and cancel courses from the convenience of your phone, tablet or computer. Our courses are currently taking place online. To access these, all you need is a tablet/smart phone or a PC.



We also offer education grants up to £300 for Open University modules, work related and non work related modules with specific bursaries for Open University modules, school support staff and care assistants. Find out more at [www.learning.unison.org.uk/financial-support](http://www.learning.unison.org.uk/financial-support).

## UNISON Welfare support – There For You

Please don't forget that if you are facing financial difficulties, UNISON's charity There For You might also be able to help - [www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/)

For more general benefit advice during the crisis see the dedicated COVID-19 Community Helpline: Freephone 0800 802 0020 / [covid19@adviceni.net](mailto:covid19@adviceni.net)



## Access UNISON support

- If you need support on specific issues in your workplace, please contact your branch rep. All contact details are listed on the branch pages of the website – [www.unison-ni.org.uk/branches.co.uk](http://www.unison-ni.org.uk/branches.co.uk)
- For general queries the regional office number remains the same – 02890270190.
- You can also email us on [UnisonNorthernIreland@unison.co.uk](mailto:UnisonNorthernIreland@unison.co.uk)

## Read more news from UNISON

Check out [www.unison-ni.org.uk/](http://www.unison-ni.org.uk/) to read more about what UNISON is doing for our education members at work and in the community.

You can also access our social media pages for regular updates including online courses, members meetings and advice. We have been running film nights; webinars; some branches run a weekly quiz... so stay connected and stay in touch!



[facebook.com/unison.northernireland/](https://facebook.com/unison.northernireland/)



[twitter.com/UNISONNI?lang=en](https://twitter.com/UNISONNI?lang=en)

The screenshot shows the UNISON News website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Home' and 'News' tabs. The main content area features several news items:

- UNISON sets out to recruit more safety reps amid COVID crisis** (WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2020): A workplace without a safety rep potentially puts the safety of our members at risk. [READ MORE](#)
- RETURN TO WORK GUIDANCE FOR CHILDCARE MEMBERS** (THURSDAY 25 JUNE 2020): UNISON is aware that many childcare facilities are now beginning to re-open as the Covid-19 lockdown begins to ease and more people return to their workplaces. The definition of a keyworker that can access childcare has been expanded. [READ MORE](#)
- Ambulance staff in Northern Ireland to receive backdated pay boost, says UNISON** (WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE 2020): Hundreds of ambulance workers in Northern Ireland are to receive a pay rise amounting to several thousand pounds each, following an extensive period of campaigning and negotiation by UNISON.

On the left side, there's a 'Home' menu with links to News, Campaigns, Health & Safety: Covid-19 - What you need to know, Join UNISON, Who's Who, Branches, Education and Training, Self-Organised / Special Interest Groups, Collective Bargaining with Employers, Equality and Human Rights, Partnerships, Membership Services, UNISON Jobs, and Contact Us. Below this is a 'UNISON Wide News' section with a snippet: 'Our members count, UNISON tells universities. Evil of anti-Semitism 'still with us', says UNISON. Holocaust Memorial Day: standing together. Holocaust Memorial Day: UNISON Banbridge remembers...'

## Do you know someone who isn't a member of UNISON yet?

### Three simple ways to join UNISON today:



Join online at  
[joinunison.org](https://joinunison.org)



Call us on  
0800 171 2193



Ask your  
UNISON rep for an  
application form

Each of our 1.4 million members has their own reasons for joining UNISON. But every one receives our help and support – with membership costing less than you might think.

If you know someone who isn't a member yet, then pass on this newsletter and talk to them about the benefits of joining UNISON now.

You could both also win £100 by entering the recruitment draw below.

- **Support** - we'll be with you when you need it most
- **Legal Help** for you at work and your family at home
- **Financial Assistance** and debt advice in times of need
- **Compensation** for you & your family
- **Discounts** including money off cars and holidays
- **Helpline** - Our helpline is open until midnight weekdays, and 4pm on Saturdays, closed on Sundays
- **Training** to help develop your career

### Calling UNISON members - Recruit a Friend & win £100 each!

If you recruit a friend to become a UNISON member, you will both be entered into a prize draw to win a £100 gift voucher each! No limits. Recruit 5 friends and get 5 entries into the draw!

The competition will run from **1st July - 31st August 2020** with the draw taking place on Friday 4th September 2020

Applications must be received no later than **31st August 2020**.

To enter the competition, new members must either:

- complete an application form, write the full name of the person/friend who recruited you along the top, and return it to UNISON Galway House, Belfast; or
- join on-line and then send an email to [UnisonNorthernIreland@unison.co.uk](mailto:UnisonNorthernIreland@unison.co.uk). Title your email 'Prize Draw' and include your own name and the name of the person/friend who recruited you.