

ANNUAL REPORT

The Work of the NI
Regional Committee
2016/2017

Who's Who on the Regional Committee in 2016/2017

The following is a list of Regional Committee members and a record of attendance for the quarterly meetings during 2017.

Joint Regional Convenors

Gabrielle Carton	Classroom Assistant, Ardnashee School & College, Derry	2
Denis Keatings	Customer Care Officer, Mater Hospital, Belfast	4

Committee Members

Flora Alfante	Nursing auxiliary, Craigavon Area Hospital	3
Paul Allen	Security Team Leader, Jordanstown University	2
Aine Brennan	Medical Secretary, Mater Hospital, Belfast	1
Ann Brown	Assistant Operational Manager, Belfast City Hospital	0
Roisin Byrne	PCSS Domestic, Royal Hospitals, Belfast	4
Caroline Campbell	Domestic Assistant, Causeway Hospital	4
Sarah Campbell	Special Needs Classroom Assistant, Holy Cross Boys	3
Deirdre Cousins	Staff Nurse, Royal Hospitals, Belfast	3
Henry Flanagan-Kane	Canteen staff, St Malachys College, Belfast	3
Siobhan Gallagher	Supervisory Assistant, St John's PS, L/Derry	0
Sonia Graham	Resource Care Asst, Ardview House	0
Stephanie Greenwood	Higher Clerical Officer, Antrim Area Hospital	2
Carol Hall	Support Services, Bluestone Unit, Craigavon Hospital	3
Kim Hall	Domestic Assistant, Causeway Hospital	3
Daphne Harper	Cleaner/Supervisor, Craigavon Senior High School	0
Kevin Hillick	Caretaker, Poleglass Youth Club, Belfast	2
Brenda Johnston	Home Help, Dromalane House (Trust Care)	3
Fiona Kelly	Home Care Worker, Community Services, Magherafelt	2
Toni Kelly	Library Assistant, Brownlow Library, Craigavon	1
Joseph Lynch	Day Care Worker, Everton Centre, Belfast	2
Roberta Magee	Homecare Co-ordinator, Belfast Trust	3
Karen McCallum	Nursing Auxiliary, Lurgan Hospital	2
Niall McCarroll	Deputy Manager, First Housing, Derry	3
Conor McCarthy	Radiographers Helpers, Royal Hospitals, Belfast	4
Brenda McColgan	Care Assistant, Greenfield Residential Home, Strabane	2
Anna McGonigle	Retired Members Forum	3
Maura McKenna	Staff Side Officer	3
Kenny McManus	Building Supervisor, Fleming Fulton Special School,	4
Alan Philson	Nursing Assistant, Waterside Hospital	2
Mark Quigley	Paramedic, Craigavon Ambulance Depot	1
Noreen Robinson	Classroom Assistant, St Catherine's PS, Strabane	4
Eoin Stewart	Staff Nurse, Mater Hospital, Belfast	3
Amanda Sweetlove	Emergency Medical Technician, Antrim Ambulance Station	3
Deborah Yapicioz	Social Worker, St Luke's site, Armagh	2
Judith Young	Community Care Worker, Church Street, Newtownards	2

NEC Members in Attendance

Margaret McKee	Catering Assistant, Royal Hospitals, Belfast	4
Lucia McKeever	Community Ambassador, Meningitis Trust	2
Alastair Long	Ambulance Personnel, Larne Ambulance Depot	3

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Introduction

We are proud to present the UNISON NI Annual Report covering the period November 2016 to October 2017.

This year's report highlights the extensive range of activity undertaken by our members, activists, branches, lay structures and staff teams over this period. It covers our organising, bargaining, campaigning and political activity during a very difficult period for NI as a whole.

Since our last annual Council meeting we have faced two elections - the NI Assembly election in March and a 'snap' general election in June. We have no Government, no proper budget and increasing destabilisation. We pay tribute to our members and activists for their extensive involvement not only in the union's campaigns around both elections, but in their outstanding work in promoting UNISON's policies and setting out demands to improve the lives of our members and their communities.

At the time of writing this report all of our branches have been involved in an intensive 6 week campaign challenging proposals for immoral cuts to health and social care. These cuts have been temporarily halted, but without real political intervention and genuine investment in our public services and jobs much more is on the way. We anticipate that we will shortly be in major campaigns over our children's education and their rights.

On the wider political front we are involved in a major initiative to protect the Peace Process from the impact of UK exit from the EU. We have lobbied for stable government based on the principles and commitment in the Good Friday Agreement.

Our members and our public services have borne the brunt of failed austerity policies. Education, health and social services, the welfare system and social housing have been hardest hit. The pay cap has deepened inequality.

Our members have signalled their intention to break it. In the vital community and voluntary sector, our members continue to deliver in the face of the collapse of many key organisations.

Despite all this we have much to celebrate. Our membership has increased in 2017 to its highest level since the foundation of UNISON, signalling that workers are prepared to fight back.

Almost 2000 members have taken the opportunity to engage in our UNISON College programme offering education and training on trade unionism, its values and the skill sets necessary to be effective trade unionists. They have also engaged in the personal and professional development programmes designed to support their health, well-being and work opportunities. No-one else makes such an offer available free of charge.

Across the services and sectors, on a daily basis, UNISON reps are protecting members' rights, securing entitlements on pay and conditions and defending those who face problems at work. This is the real life of the union. It is work that rarely comes with acknowledgement or gratitude. On behalf of our Regional Committee we acknowledge this outstanding contribution and say 'thank you' to our members, our elected reps and our staff team, all of whom go above and beyond the call of duty because we are all trade unionists – and that is what we do.

We also take this opportunity to pay tribute to two outstanding UNISON 'forces of nature'. We are deeply honoured that Margaret McKee has been elected President of UNISON and we say farewell to our champion of the working class, our good friend and former General Secretary, Rodney Bickerstaffe.

<i>Patricia McKeown</i>	<i>Denis Keatings</i>	<i>Gabrielle Carton</i>
Regional Secretary	Joint Regional Convener	Joint Regional Convener

UNISON Objectives and Plan

NI Regional Council

The NI Regional Council comprises delegates from branches, service groups and self organised groups. It meets annually:

- to debate union policy;
- to measure our progress on the national and NI objectives; and
- to set out the forthcoming work programme on behalf of our members.

Throughout the year the decisions of the Regional Council are actioned by the Regional Committee, UNISON staff and branches. This report to NI Regional Council is a record of the work of the Regional Committee and all lay structures since the annual meeting of the Council in October 2016.



May Day 2017

The Regional Committee takes this opportunity to thank all UNISON members, activists and staff for their role in making the past year such a success.

The UNISON NI Plan 2016/17

Each year the National Executive Council sets its objectives and priorities. We in turn add our own priorities which are set by Regional Council resolutions, our own knowledge of the political situation, and priorities identified by branches and the UNISON team of activists and staff working in partnership.

The NEC objectives remain fairly constant but the priorities are revised each year. Our core priorities are protecting our public services and our members' jobs, and growing the union. For UNISON NI this means engaging with our members; strong bargaining with the employers; political campaigning with equality and human rights at its core; and building the union through a strong organising programme.





Objective 1

Building our union

“Recruiting, organising, representing & retaining members”

Recruiting and organising

Recruitment and retention

■ Our achievements in 2016/2017

The 2016/17 Fighting Fund Initiative

This is a good news story. In September 2016 funding was secured for 9 Fighting Fund Organiser posts covering 8 projects and 22 branches over a 12 month period.

Commencing in November 2016, the majority of the projects cover multiple branches in health, education, the community and voluntary sector as well as our 2 University branches.

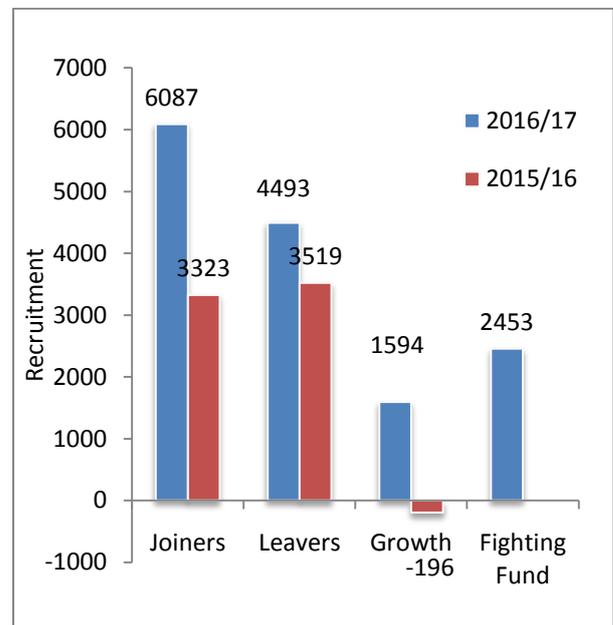
The outcomes of the Fighting Fund Initiative during its first 11 months (15 November to 11 October 2017) are summarised below and show that this has been its most successful year to date.

Outcomes - recruitment: All 22 branches participating in the Fighting Fund Initiative have had a significant increase in their membership, and have experienced a turnaround on the ratio between new recruits and leavers.

Fig 1 shows that during its first 11 months the overall initiative (12-month) target of 2250 new members has already been exceeded with 2453 new members recruited to date across the participating branches.

FFO recruitment comprises 40% of the total number new members recruited by UNISON NI over the period of the current initiative – 6087 new members. This is an 83% increase in total recruitment compared to the same period in 2015/16.

Fig 1: UNISON NI Recruitment, 15 Nov 2016 to 11 October 2017



The initiative has also had a positive impact on wider activist recruitment with branches recruiting an additional 3634 new members over and above those directly recruited by FFOs during the period.

Table 1 (overleaf) shows that between 15th November and 15 September branches with some form of Fighting Fund support increased their recruitment by a total of 99% over the period.

Those 17 branches with dedicated FFO support of between 1 to 5 days a week had the largest recruitment increase of 111%.

The 5 branches that only participated in the Fighting Fund Homecare Project increased their recruitment by 62%.

The 7 branches without any Fighting Fund support increased their recruitment by 25%.

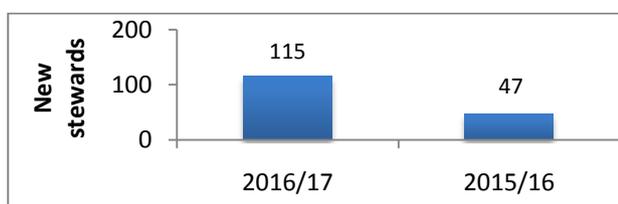
Table 1: % year on year increase in recruitment of those branches with Fighting Fund Organisers

Branch	% increase in recruitment between 2015/16 & 2016/17
Belfast Education	↑ 88%
Causeway*	↑ 33%
Community & Voluntary	↑ 63%
Craigavon Health	↑ 63%
Down Education	↑ 144%
Down Lisburn*	↑ 79%
Foyle*	↑ 85%
Mater	↑ 111%
Muckamore Abbey	↑ 612%
Newry & Mourne	↑ 126%
NEELB	↑ 178%
North & West Belfast	↑ 220%
Northern Health	↑ 94%
Omagh Fermanagh*	↑ 31%
Orchard H&SC	↑ 84%
Royal Hospitals	↑ 58%
South & East Belfast*	↑ 59%
Southern Education	↑ 82%
Sperrin & Devenish	↑ 513%
UU Coleraine	↑ 280%
UU J' stown	↑ 149%
UCHT	↑ 149%
Total	↑ 99%

* Private homecare project only

Outcomes - Building the activist base: The presence of Fighting Fund Organisers has assisted in building both the activist base and member participation. FFOs have been involved in identifying new leaders and their recruitment activity has enabled Area Organisers to devote additional time to building the steward base and encouraging greater membership participation in the life of the union. Fig 3 shows that between November 2016 and September 2017, 115 new stewards were recruited by branches with Fighting Fund Organisers compared to only 47 the previous year – an increase of 144%.

Fig 2 – New stewards recruited in 2016/17, compared to 2015/16



Outcomes - Bargaining and representation:

Having dedicated Fighting Fund Organisers has also improved representation and introduced new items for the bargaining agenda. The FFOs have identified issues in areas arising from direct contact with members. The process for onward referral of these issues to branch secretaries and other organising staff has improved the union's response to issues affecting the members.

The Private Homecare Project

Homecare is best delivered by directly employed NHS staff. However we also have obligations to our members and workers in private homecare. Our strategy is:

- to halt further privatisation from the NHS to the private sector and return privatised services back in house;
- to recruit, organise, negotiate and secure recognition in the private homecare sector, company by company.

A key vehicle for delivering on this strategy is the Private Homecare Project. The project has been running for a number of years and brings together the RMT, organising staff and the 10 UNISON NI branches who have private homecare members. During 2016/17 the project again secured 2 Fighting Fund Organisers.

To date this year the FFOs in the project have recruited 554 new members - 10% above the yearly target in only 11 months. Branch reps have recruited an additional 108 new members. We now have 1184 members in the sector, a 40% increase.

Full details of our negotiating outcomes with private providers and our interventions with Trusts and the wider healthcare system are detailed in Section 2 (Bargaining) and Section 3 (Campaigns).

Infill recruitment in public services:

Throughout the year, the organising team has continued to work to detailed organising plans linking branch and regional campaigns to direct, sustainable recruitment. Successful campaigns such as 'Pay Up Now' are real

examples of how encouraging member involvement around workplace issues can secure membership increase



During the year, Regional Committee undertook an analysis of leavers to identify trends and to inform our recruitment strategy. As expected, the vast majority are within our largest sectors of membership – health and education – and within key occupational group such as nurses, nursing assistants, administrative staff, domestics, homecare workers, classroom assistants, catering staff and cleaners. This analysis re-emphasised the need for branches to prioritise infill recruitment and those branches with Fighting Fund support have been particularly successful during the year to date.

The target to be reached by branches for the 2017 Autumn/Winter campaign is 1000 to ensure growth and allow for leavers in the fourth quarter.

Special initiatives: The leaver analysis undertaken by Regional Committee highlights the need to continue to prioritise special recruitment initiatives in those sectors with a traditionally high turnover of staff such as private nursing homes, private homecare and the community and voluntary sector. NI-wide recruitment initiatives have also taken place in the youth sector and within contractors providing public services.

The leaver analysis revealed that very few members left to join another union. Cuts and non-replacement of retiring staff is the main issue. The fact that membership has increased in the majority of branches during difficult times is testimony to the commitment of activists and staff.

Our self organised groups continue to support branches through direct recruitment; increased recruitment of young members; the organisation of events for members, their families and communities; and raising UNISON's profile in key bargaining, campaigning and policy areas. Some notable activities in 2017 include:

- Women's Committee direct action on the pay frequency and living wage campaigns;
- recruitment initiatives at Pride events in Belfast, Newry and Derry;
- special events to support our BME members and migrant workers
- the zero hours campaign from young members.

■ Overall recruitment progress

Achieving 5000 members in the first three quarters of the year is a significant milestone and well on the way to achieving the overall target set in our 2016/17 Fighting Fund bid.

As we all know, there will be a serious impact on jobs in both the public and private sector as a result of further budget cuts and continuing austerity. The Regional Committee strategy is to ensure continued growth and increased union density across all our areas of organisation in preparation for our sustained campaigns on pay, decent work and public sector investment.

Recruitment figures are a snapshot in time but also indicate trends. Regional Committee approaches them with caution. However, we are satisfied that our excellent RMS team achieve accuracy within 2%, despite the fact that we continue to be hampered by the problems in the NHS employer payroll system.

We continue to maintain centralised processing and database in partnership with all branches.

2016 recruitment outcomes: Table 2 shows that our final Jan-Dec 2016 total was 4248 new recruits. 1459 new members were recruited in October to December reflecting the success of the Autumn/Winter campaign and the impact of the Fighting Fund Initiative from mid-November to the end of the year.

At last year's Regional Council, 2 branches had already exceeded their target. By the end of the year this had risen to 9 branches, with

a further 2 branches ending the year within a few percentage points of the target. At the other end of the scale, 7 branches fell below 50% and of these 1 was coping with outsourcing and another with transfer to the civil service.

As reported in the next section, we have conducted a 3 year review on recruitment and retention trends to better inform the 2018 organising strategy.

Table 2– UNISON NI recruitment by branch, 1 Jan 2016 to 31 Dec 2016

Branch	2016 Target Recruitment	2016 Recruitment			% of target met
		Jan to Dec	Jan to Sept	Oct to Dec	
Community & Voluntary	200	298	209	89	149%
Craigavon Unison	140	195	145	50	139%
Belfast Education	150	198	139	59	132%
Orchard	160	176	125	51	110%
Health Agencies	50	54	41	13	108%
Royal Hospitals	413	448	290	158	108%
South & East	200	213	140	73	107%
NEELB	150	159	96	63	106%
Causeway	170	173	117	56	102%
N&W Belfast Health	162	155	101	54	96%
Sperrin Devenish	80	76	30	46	95%
Northern Health	600	519	321	198	87%
Mater Hospital Trust	100	85	48	37	85%
Down Education	150	123	66	57	82%
UCHT	300	247	157	90	82%
Down Lisburn	300	237	160	77	79%
Derry Education	150	113	78	35	75%
Foyle	300	221	142	79	74%
Omagh & Fermanagh	240	145	117	28	60%
Greenpark Health	110	69	50	19	63%
Newry	200	114	82	32	57%
Southern Ed	100	52	35	17	52%
Muckamore Abbey	50	23	8	15	46%
N I Blood Transfusion	12	5	3	2	42%
N I Ambulance	85	30	24	6	35%
Belfast City Hospital	313	104	57	47	33%
Rathgael	15	3	3	0	20%
Jordanstown Univ	50	8	2	6	16%
Coleraine Magee Univ	40	5	3	2	13%
Total	4990	4248	2789	1459	85%

2017 recruitment outcomes: Moving to current achievement, Table 3 measures recruitment activity from January to end September 2017. It shows that with current recruitment of 5165 new members to date, we are already 165 ahead of our yearly target recruitment. This is an increase of 89% on those recruited during the same period last year.

Table 3 and Figs 3 to 7 on the following page show that to date 21 of our branches are showing growth, but the real picture taken

over a 3 year period shows that 18 of our branches have grown.

In the coming months branch targets will be reviewed to ensure that branches are not given a false sense of security if their targets too low to match turnover and recruitment potential. Alternatively, some branches have recruitment targets which are too high given turnover and current density. Following Regional Council 2017, new targets will be agreed with all branches as part of the new assessment and planning process.

Table 3 – UNISON NI recruitment by branch, 1 Jan to 30 Sept 2017

Branch	Annual target	January 2017 to date	Same period 2016	No required to reach 2017 Target	1 year growth trend	3 year growth trend
Northern Health**	600	583	298	17	↑	↑
UCHT**	300	437	152	Target Met	↑	↑
Royal Hospital**	413	364	257	49	↑	↑
Community & Voluntary**	200	337	198	Target Met	↑	↑
North & West**	162	307	93	Target Met	↑	↑
Down Lisburn*	300	273	149	27	↑	↓
Orchard H&SC**	160	269	120	TargetMet	↑	↑
Craigavon Health**	170	268	139	Target Met	↑	↑
NEELB**	150	262	93	Target Met	↑	↑
Foyle Health*	300	239	126	61	↑	↓
Belfast Education**	150	221	131	Target Met	↓	↑
South & East*	200	211	129	Target Met	↑	↓
Newry & Mourne**	200	191	75	9	↑	↓
Sperrin & Devenish**	80	170	28	Target Met	↑	↑
Omagh & Fermanagh*	240	167	101	73	↓	↓
Derry Education	150	147	75	3	↓	↑
Causeway*	170	140	103	30	↑	↓
Down Education**	150	133	53	17	↑	↑
Southern Education**	100	98	34	2	↓	↑
Mater**	100	96	40	4	↑	↑
Belfast City Hospital	313	78	46	235	↓	↓
Greenpark	110	50	43	60	↑	↑
Muckamore Abbey**	50	48	7	2	↑	↑
N I Ambulance	85	24	22	61	↓	↓
UU Coleraine**	40	18	3	22	↑	↓
Jordanstown University**	50	15	2	35	↓	↑
Blood Transfusion	12	5	3	7	↑	↓
Health Agencies	15	2	3	13	↑	↑
Rathgael	15	2	3	13	↓	↓
Total	5000	5165	2561	Target met	↑	↑

*Fighting Fund private homecare project only

**Branch-based Fighting Fund Organiser

Branch 3 year recruitment trends, 2014-2017

Fig 3: 0-500 members

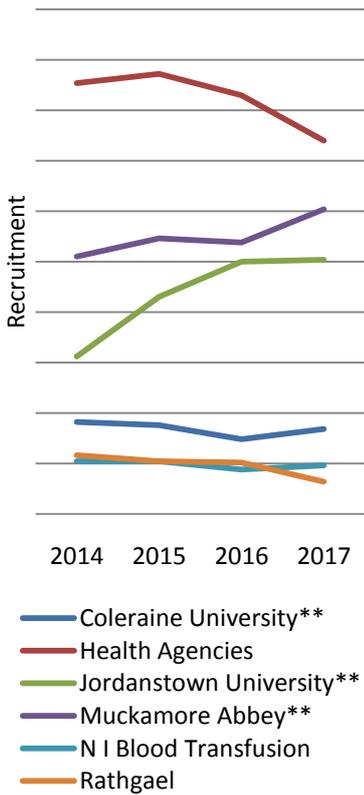


Fig 4: 501-1000 members

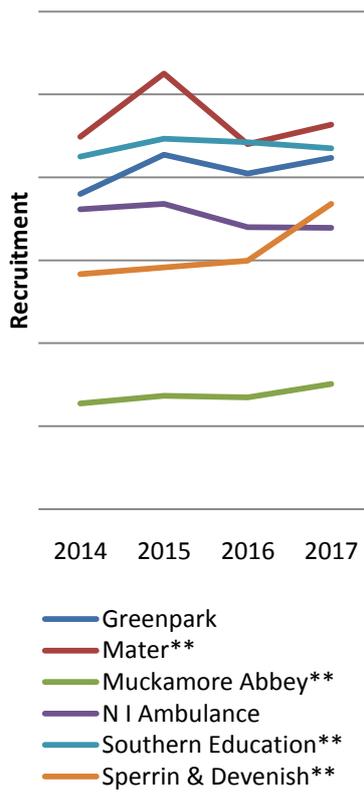


Fig 5: 1001-1600 members

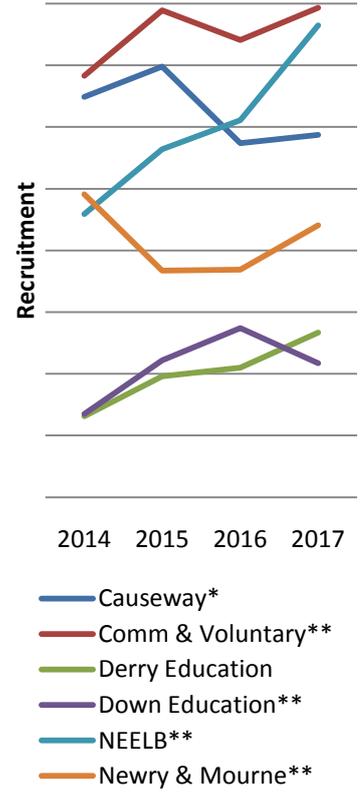


Fig 6: 1601 - 2000 members

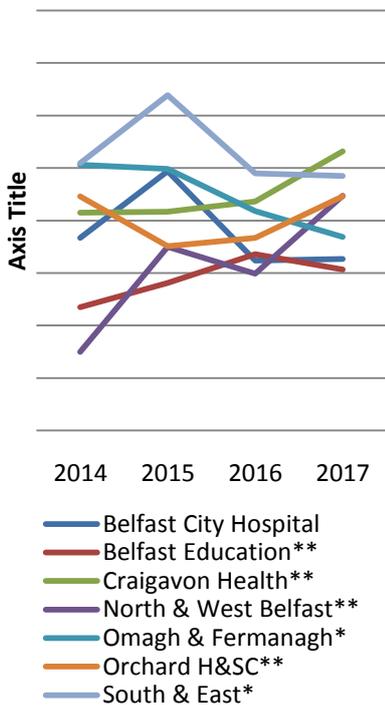
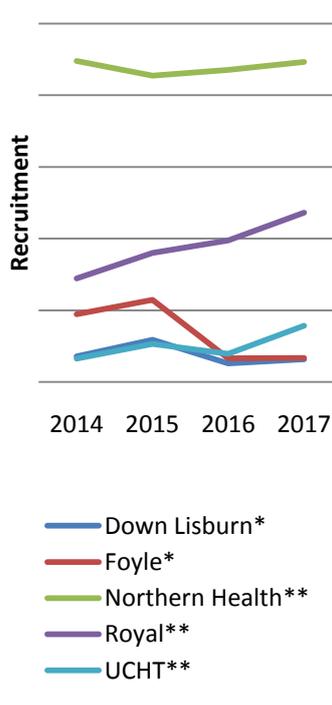


Fig 7: 2000 members or more



The charts on this page show recruitment trends across branches from 2014 to date. Patterns of growth or retraction over this period are also identified in the final column in Table 3 on the previous page.

*FFO Homecare project only
 **Branch-based FFO

Recruitment across key sectors: The impact of the Fighting Fund and new branch-based recruitment initiatives is reflected in significantly increased recruitment to date across the key sectors (Table 4) compared to the same period last year. This increase is very positive, particularly given that it has occurred at a time of ongoing cuts and job loss in both health and an education service still facing the upheaval created by the formation of the Education Authority.

Community and voluntary sector recruitment has again increased but our membership continues to suffer from funding cuts with much more to come as a result of EU exit.

In the private sector, the Fighting Fund Homecare initiative has had a positive impact, but poor terms and conditions, particularly in homecare, continue to produce a higher than average attrition rate.

Table 4 - UNISON NI total recruitment by sector, 1 Jan to 30 Sept

Recruitment figures by sector	Jan-Sept 2017	Jan-Sept 2016	Total for 2016
Health and social services (excluding private sector)	2313	1605	2212
Higher education	15	18	24
Education and other NJC	977	425	648
Community & Voluntary	407	261	342
Private sector*	1453	741	1022
(Young members 26 and under)	(1126)	(639)	(750)
TOTAL	5165	3054	4248

*including private homecare, contractors and PNHS

Building branch and workplace organisation

■ Branch Development

Regional organising awards: At the 2017 Organising Awards in May we took time to celebrate the extraordinary volume of work and achievements of our branches and activists during the previous year.

14 branches submitted a total of 22 nominations in categories covering:

- highly successful recruitment campaigns;
- innovative member participation projects;
- smart communications initiatives;
- campaigns to save services;
- campaigns to highlight the value of services; and
- smart bargaining campaigns linked to industrial action, public support and political campaigning.

Award winners received a framed certificate, with Gold Award winners also receiving a UNISON 'flame' and sharing stories on what made their campaign or strategy so successful.

Excellence Awards were presented to Tom Hughes and Noel Muldoon for outstanding service to UNISON, and to Rosie McConachie for excellence in her support for our LGBT and wider membership.

Natalie Muir (Northern Health) and Deirdre Cousins (Royal Hospitals) received Gold awards as outstanding new stewards. The award winners are showcased on the following page.

The Branch Development Group is currently reviewing the format of the 2018 Organising Awards which are likely to switch to an evening event with a visual record of some of the entries to enable wider sharing of successful initiatives. Nominations will be invited in early November.

Organising & Recruitment awards

Gold award

- Northern Health – ‘Flu jab’ organising & recruitment campaign, Antrim Hospital
- North & West – Social care registration campaign
- Craigavon Hospital – Cancer focus bus (Health & Wellbeing plan) recruitment



Northern Health – Gold award winners for ‘flu jab’ organising & recruitment campaign

Communicating awards

Gold award

- Northern Health – Development of casework database

Silver award

- Royal Hospitals – Social media communications campaign



Royal Hospitals - Silver award winners for their social media communications campaign

Silver award

- Derry Education – Organising & recruitment campaign

Membership participation awards

Gold award

- Northern Health – Black and migrant workers ‘One Day’ event
- Royal Hospitals – RVH Inez McCormack Women’s Committee
- Belfast Education – Stars in our schools member participation campaign



Belfast Education – Gold award winners for ‘Stars in our Schools’ member participation campaign

Campaigning awards

Gold award

- North & West – Campaign to oppose closure of adult day centres



Service users who supported the N&W Belfast branch campaign to oppose the closure of adult day centres

Excellence awards

Gold award

- Northern Health – Rosie McConachie for excellence in support of our LGBT members & wider membership over 28 years
- Greenpark – Tom Hughes for excellence during 30 years service to UNISON
- Orchard – Noel Muldoon for excellence during 30 years service to UNISON



Tom Hughes – Gold award for excellence during 30 years of service to members of UNISON

Silver award

- Foyle - Alison Burke for excellence in her role negotiating for support services staff.

Outstanding new steward awards

Gold award

- Northern Health – Natalie Muir
- Royal Hospitals – Deirdre Cousins

Silver award

- Omagh & Fermanagh – Anne Marie Gillen



Deirdre Cousins, Royal Hospitals – Gold award for outstanding new steward

Negotiation and representation awards

Gold award

- Omagh & Fermanagh – Regional uniform campaign
- Ulster Hospital / Down Lisburn – Clock-in machines campaign

Silver award

- Northern Trust – Negotiations and representation strategy
- Orchard – Campaign at Trust level to oppose single pay frequency



Omagh & Fermanagh – Gold award winners for their Regional Uniform campaign

Branch development group: The Branch Development Group comprises Regional Convenors, NEC members and elected representatives from the Regional Committee working with the Head of Organising.

The work programme of the Group is based on motions carried at the 2016 Regional Council and the current Regional Committee strategy and includes:

- working with the Education Department to develop a 2 year rolling programme of mandatory training for all branch committee members;
- reviewing branch rules to ensure they meet the Code of Good Branch Practice;
- undertaking a review of the Organising Awards to increase branch participation;
- developing guidance on branch-based self-organised groups (building on a recent motion at UNISON Annual Conference and the success of the Royal Hospitals Inez McCormack Women's Committee).

During 2017, the group contacted all branches to highlight the beneficial role that it can play in supporting branch development including recruitment support; special initiatives to rebuild the steward base; support on branch finance and support to develop branch committees. The group also 'trouble shoots' on behalf of the Regional Committee when branches face difficulties. A number of branches have requested support from the Group and this is ongoing work.

Branch development strategies: In order to ensure that all our branches receive the necessary development support, our branch assessment, planning and budgeting activity is co-ordinated across the region.

Our main aim continues to be to grow the membership and develop the activist base in order to achieve UNISON's core objectives. This requires us to Map, Measure, Plan, and Resource. To enable us to do this effectively, Regional Committee continuously reviews our use of the tools available to branches to support them. The core tools are:

- joint branch assessment;
- development of the branch plan;
- OLBA, branch budgeting and financial training to implement the plan.

Joint branch assessments, activity based budgets and their implementation: Following decision taken at NDC last year, joint branch assessments have a new format. This is to make sure everyone in the branch committee understands how branch finance works, and uses that information to resource the branch plan. A new online tool is also being rolled out with support from Head Office.

As in previous years our organisers and RMS staff ease the pressure on branches by creating up to date 'maps' and graphs to produce a picture of each branch. This enables branches to participate in informed assessments. These maps set out very clearly:

- the geographic spread of our members;
- the number of employers;
- the location and occupation of all members in each employer and workplace;
- the level of steward cover for each,

- the potential for recruitment;
- actual recruitment by employer, location and occupation;
- actual leavers on the same basis.

Creating this picture aids branch committees to take informed decisions and keep focused on the core issues to be addressed in the branch plan. This plan focuses on recruitment and organising, core bargaining issues, relevant campaigns, and the resources allocated to deliver the goals.

In addition, branches are also now required to produce 'objective based' branch budgets based on the union's core objectives and the decisions taken at the Joint Branch Assessment. This involves branch committees considering their income and expenditure for the previous year. Committees are then better placed to take informed decisions on how the resources will be allocated for the new plan.

Historically, the majority of NI branches have produced good quality budgets linked to their annual branch plan. These budgets are now developed using the computer based OLBA programme. This programme is designed to make financial management easier for all branches, but also to enable branches to monitor and measure their decisions on resource allocation.

Regional Committee keeps implementation of branch plans under continuous review. We provide support on both the general branch management of funds and on budgeting. Where the use of OLBA becomes inactive, the Committee instructs that special support be given to the relevant branches. Our staff team works in partnership with branch teams and where necessary the Branch Development Group steps in to give additional support where difficulties arise.

Branch plans only work if they are translated into core agenda items at monthly branch committee meetings and activity is measured. This is a key Regional Committee recommendation and we are pleased to report that most branches are now moving in this direction.

Branch Secretaries Forum: The Branch Secretaries Forum meets quarterly and has been operating successfully for eight years. During 2017, members have discussed branch and regional strategies for challenging cuts and have shared best practice recruitment initiatives. Early in the year Agnes Fraser presented on the ongoing impact of welfare benefits cuts to UNISON members, their families and communities.



The Regional Pool: Bids to the Regional Pool were suspended to facilitate the branch 'top-up' programme. However, on new NEC advice Regional Pools are again open for bids from branches and from the region.

Established by Regional Committee under guidance from the NEC, the Regional Pool Group considers proposals and makes financial awards to branches and lay structures to advance our organising agenda. The Group works to criteria established under both national and regional guidelines.

Regional Pool funding is an important opportunity for branches to support the Branch Plan and applications must be part of the branch development process. As such they must be supported by:

- a copy of the Branch Assessment form, signed by the Branch Secretary and Regional Organiser;
- a copy of the branch accounts and the previous year's annual return;
- the detailed and costed plan for the proposed activity.

Successful past projects have included:

- pop-up UNISON stalls in shopping malls;
- coffee mornings for new members;
- film nights linked to union campaigns on issues such as women's rights, tackling racism, and international solidarity;
- new types of publicity materials linked to member meetings around campaigns;
- special welfare benefits clinics;
- street theatre linked to recruitment;
- special events for hard to organise workplaces e.g. private sector and voluntary.

General Political Fund: A number of NI branches have made successful bids to the GPF in 2017. Bids are assessed by the Regional Implementation Group according to strict criteria established by the NEC. Bids must take account of the union's campaign priorities and will primarily involve expenditure of a clearly political nature.

This will include campaigns, lobbying, research or other activities:

- that embed trade union principles and values in the membership;
- that have a particular focus on promoting equality and human rights including cultural activity;
- that seek to influence or affect the development of public policy;
- that try new and innovative ways of putting UNISON's policies before the public.

All bids should seek to increase awareness of trade union activity and seek to recruit new members into UNISON. This could include:

- campaigns that directly involve members and highlight the value of specific public services e.g. school meals, NHS ambulance, and the contribution of support staff to the healthcare team. Such projects would also involve local communities;
- projects on strengthening the knowledge and values of trade unionism, including uncovering local trade union history and women's history;
- projects which enable the development of self-organisation on a cross-branch or geographical basis;

- projects which use Solidarity campaigns to strengthen awareness of trade union values

Measuring organising success: To assist with joint branch assessments and the branch development programme, we use a range of branch development indicators.

Table 5 on the following page indicates the paid release resources available to branches and the current position on branch assessment and plans. It also tracks attendance at the Branch Secretaries Forum where much information is exchanged. We also track

progress on the stewards' base and the extent of proportionality.

Democracy in decision-making is tracked in the section on branch minutes and is essential to ensure that decisions are democratically taken and recorded including decisions relating to budgets, income and expenditure.

Branch assessments took place between January and March 2017 and are currently being re-run between September and December 2017, prior to AGMs. This will remain their regular timeslot on the regional calendar.

Table 5 - Branch development indicators, 2017

Branch	Paid release	Branch Assessment	Attended BS Forum /Team UNISON	Mapped	1 year Recruitment trend - 2017	New stewards from Oct 2016		Branch minutes on File
						Women	Men	
Belfast City Hospital	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	2	2	Yes
Belfast Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↓	6	1	Yes
Causeway	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	↑	0	0	Yes
Health Agencies	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	↓	1	4	Yes
UU Coleraine	No	Yes	No	Yes	↑	2	3	Yes
Community & Vol	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	5	0	Yes
Craigavon Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	3	2	Yes
Derry Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↓	2	1	Yes
Down & Lisburn	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	9	0	Yes
Down Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	0	0	Yes
Foyle Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	2	0	Yes
Greenpark Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	0	0	Yes
UU Jordanstown	No	Yes	No	Yes	↓	1	0	Yes
Mater Hospital	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	10	1	Yes
Muckamore	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	↑	0	0	No
N & W Belfast Trust	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	3	2	Yes
NI Blood Transfusion	Yes	No	No	No	↑	0	1	No
NE Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	4	1	Yes
Newry & Mourne	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	5	0	Yes
NI Ambulance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↓	0	1	Yes
Northern Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	8	2	Yes
Omagh & Fermanagh	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↓	5	3	Yes
Orchard H&SC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	3	1	Yes
Rathgael	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↓	0	0	Yes
Royal Hospitals	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	7	2	Yes
S & E Belfast	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	13	0	Yes
Southern Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↓	2	0	Yes
Sperrin & Devenish	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	↑	3	2	Yes
UCHT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	6	2	Yes

As can be seen from Table 6, branch participation in those areas required by Rule is high. The final columns relate to branch participation in their own local public meetings and demonstrations, those organised by UNISON on an NI-wide basis and participation in marches and demonstrations organised under the umbrella of ICTU. Participation in our 'Team UNISON' events is not mandatory

but commands a high turn-out from branches. In 2017 most branches directly organised their own protests and demonstrations on a range of issues.

Overall branch and membership engagement in local and regional campaign activity has been extremely high throughout the year.

Table 6- Branch participation, 2016/17

Branch	Submit Financial return on time	Attend NDC to rule	Attend Service Group Conf	Attend Regional Council	Attend Regional Service Group	Accessed Equality Training	Took part UNISON NI Demos	Attended Team UNISON	Attended May Day Event / ICTU demos	Organised Branch public events/ demos
Belfast City Hosp	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Belfast Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Causeway	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Health Agencies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UU Coleraine	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Community & Vol	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Craigavon Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Derry Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Down & Lisburn	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Down Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Foyle Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Greenpark Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UU Jordanstown	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Mater Hospital	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Muckamore	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N & W Belfast	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NIBTS	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
NE Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Newry & Mourne	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NI Ambulance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Northern Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Omagh & Ferm H	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Orchard H&SC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rathgael	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Royal Hospitals	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
S & E Belfast	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Southern Educ	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sperrin Devenish	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UCHT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

■ Membership participation and building the stewards base

Annual General Meetings: All AGMS were completed by end March 2017. Some branches failed to reach a quorum but in dialogue with regional officials have agreed new formats for 2018. Most branches produced financial reports for the AGM in

compliance with NEC guidance. Where this was not done in the correct format, the Branch Development Group has recommended special discussion sessions with the relevant branch committees. Regional Committee has re-emphasised the

need for co-ordination and co-operation between Branch Secretaries and organising staff to ensure better coverage for 2018 AGMs.

Direct member involvement: Thousands of our members have been directly involved in demonstrations, lobbies, addressing Boards and challenging political parties and local politicians throughout 2017. Members have participated in UNISON and ICTU surveys on abortion, mental health, workplace problems, stress and as part of our extensive partnership programme.

The use of social media by members, branch and self-organised groups has again increased. All branches now have either Facebook pages or websites and most are linked in to the UNISON NI Facebook and website. The extent of member activity is documented and advertised and has resulted in increased direct involvement of members in the life of the union. Branches have also taken advantage of the bulk emailing system and the text messaging services available from the Regional Centre.

The increased use of social media has pros and cons. Branches need to ensure that UNISON protocols are strictly adhered to at all times. We are also experiencing an increase in disciplinary action against

members in a variety of circumstances where social media has been used.

Steward base: As reported previously, the Fighting Fund Initiative has enabled Area Organisers to devote additional time to building the steward base and encouraging greater membership participation in the life of the union. Over the past 11 months, 144% more stewards were recruited in branches with Fighting Fund Organisers during the current project compared to the same period the previous year.

The “Get Elected” campaign was run between October and December 2016 with each branch working to a programme with organising staff to encourage members to stand for election as local shop stewards. The 2017 programme continues on a rolling basis across workplace and sectors to ensure an increase in workplace steward cover.

We continue to build the stewards network on a geographic as well as workplace basis. Recently, we have nominated over 55 UNISON reps to be co-ordinators in the new ICTU campaign challenging cuts, the pay cap and precarious work. The UNISON teams, which cross all our sectors of organisation, will meet on a geographic basis to co-ordinate our part of the campaign.

Table 7: Proportionality by activist post

Activist Position	Total 2017	Women 2017	Men 2017	Total 2016	Women 2016	Men 2016
Branch Secretaries	45	58%	42%	46	63%	37%
Branch Chairs	36	67%	33%	32	63%	38%
Branch Treasurers	47	81%	19%	51	76%	24%
Other branch posts	129	63%	37%	144	60%	40%
Workplace stewards	629	68%	32%	629	66%	34%
Contacts	373	89%	11%	333	89%	11%
Total	1259	71%	29%	1235	71%	29%

■ Branch funding

Total income returned to Head Office was £3,833,005. This represents an increase year on year.

Total income returned to branches for 2016 was £919,437.

Participation & Structures

Proportionality and fair representation and operation of UNISON NI structures

The gender distribution of our membership in NI is 84% women.

The Constitution of **Regional Council** ensures proportionality. Branches and other lay structures fully co-operate to ensure that delegates are proportional on the basis of gender. Self-organised groups and specialist groups participate and the average turnout for Regional Council is more than 85%. Women’s participation at the 2016 Regional Council was 72%.

The **Regional Committee** met in formal session 4 times since last Regional Council. The Committee has 40 members and its composition currently stands at 70% women. All meetings were quorate. 4 members did not attend throughout the year for a variety of reasons.

The agenda was dominated by progress on union building, our campaigns against

austerity, crises in the political system, and the EU referendum.

Our delivery on UNISON’s core objectives and priorities in all four main areas of work are detailed throughout the report. Regional Committee members also devote additional time to organising priorities through our sub groups as set out in Table 8 below.



Table 8 – Regional Committee sub-structures

Branch development group	Education group	Regional pool group	Regional implementation group (also GPF)
Gabrielle Carton	Gabrielle Carton	Gabrielle Carton	Gabrielle Carton
Denis Keatings	Denis Keatings	Denis Keatings	Denis Keatings
Margaret McKee	Aine Brennan	Margaret McKee	Margaret McKee
Lucia McKeever	Judith Young	Lucia McKeever	Lucia McKeever
Alastair Long	<i>And representatives</i>	Alastair Long	Alastair Long
Paul Allen	<i>from Branch Education</i>	Flora Alfante	Patricia McKeown
Stephanie Greenwood	<i>Officers, ULRs, lay tutors</i>	Roisin Byrne	Thomas Mahaffy (for GPF)
Amanda Sweetlove		Fiona Kelly	
Deborah Yapicioz		Noreen Robinson	

Our joint **Regional Convenors**, Gabrielle Carton and Denis Keatings, were re-elected at last year’s Regional Council and have presided over all formal meetings of our regional lay structures and a series of important engagements at HQ level and with

other regions. The Convenors have been active in securing commitments on resources, the development of the GPF, and arrangements with the centre on handling political devolution.

The **Regional Implementation Group** comprises the senior activists listed above. The Group oversees implementation of Regional Committee and NEC policy between meetings of the Regional Committee. The group also has responsibility for decisions on local applications to the General Political Fund (GPF) and carries out a Standing Orders function for Regional Council.

NEC: Margaret McKee, Alastair Long and Lucia McKeever are the NEC members for NI.

UNISON President: Following NDC in June, we are pleased to announce that Margaret McKee, our NEC member representing low paid women workers, was elected as UNISON President. This is a reflection of the high esteem in which Margaret is held across UNISON and is the second time NI has held the Presidency within the past few years. We are honoured to have Margaret as our

keynote speaker at the 2017 Regional Council.

Team UNISON is an amalgamation of all branches and lay structures, and continued to meet throughout the year to aid in the co-ordination of our key campaigns. The 2017 meetings concentrated on key UNISON campaigns on public sector pay, fighting cuts, as well as discussing UNISON's participation in the new ICTU 'Better work, Better lives' campaign to protect peoples' jobs and create new employment.



Self organised and special issue groups

'Giving voice to tackling disadvantage and combating discrimination'

The Regional Committee continues to support and take strategic advice from our self-organised and special interest groups. All have played a vital role in UNISON-wide campaigns over the past year while

continuing to deliver on their own extensive work programmes. The following brief reports highlight their key activities.

■ Women's Committee

The Women's Committee has 47 members representing 22 branches across the region. In 2016/17, Committee members again participated extensively in a wide range of organising and campaigning activity. The Committee had 3 meetings over the year, as well as organising a very well attended Film night.

Participation: Work is ongoing to develop further local women's committees or forums based on the NDC motion. Women activists continue to organise local events and ongoing campaigns within their branches such as welfare advice sessions and women members' meetings to encourage women to

become more involved in the life of the union.



UNISON President: The Committee is enormously proud that Royal Hospitals Branch women's activist Margaret McKee has been elected to serve as UNISON President.

Margaret also won the TUC Women's Gold Badge in September 2016. The Committee organised a "film night" in April 2017 to celebrate Margaret's achievements and to also recognise Fortwilliam Day centre worker Elizabeth Cameron who received the UNISON Health Hero Award.



Conferences and committees: A delegation of 25 activists representing 16 branches attended the *National Women's Conference* and the NI motion on "The exit of the UK from the EU has profound implications for women's rights" was supported unanimously.

The *2017 ICTU Joint Women's Committee Seminar* took place in September in Portlaoise. This year's seminar theme was 'inclusive growth – a route for achieving gender equality'. The UNISON delegation played a prominent role and workshops included

- gender budgeting – policy and practice;
- reform of abortion legislation North and South;
- Seeking Asylum – what are the particular issues for women?

UNISON women members are represented on the *ICTU Women's Committee* by Anne Speed and Danielle McCusker. Anne and Danielle, along with the Regional Secretary, are also active participants in the *TU Women's Council of the Isles* that includes the ICTU, STUC, Wales TUC and TUC. The Council last met in Cardiff in October 2017.

Work programme: Progress on the 2017 work programme is recorded in this report under the key headings. Additional elements of the work programme arise from

engagement with ICTU and the women's TU Council of the Isles and include:

- austerity and the impact on women;
- equal pay;
- menopause as a trade union issue.

Abortion as a workplace issue: UNISON members took part in a multi-union survey of women workers in both the private and public sector and on a cross-border basis given that the campaigns for abortion rights are running in both jurisdictions. The largest response to the survey was from UNISON members who have indicated clearly that this is both a workplace and trade union issue. The survey results are due to be launched in Belfast and Dublin in October 2017.

International Women's Day: UNISON women participated in a wide range of activities during the programme of events for IWD. The rally took place in Belfast on 4th March. The theme was 'Peace, solidarity & sustenance - Keeping body and soul together'. Every year we celebrate IWD to mark the political, economic, social and cultural gains of women while highlighting our continued fight for equality.

Regional education programme: Committee members continued to deliver a significant element of the regional education programme with 119 women members attending our Building confidence for women; Pathways; and Women's health and history. These courses are particularly designed to encourage more women to become active. In particular 39 women attended the Pathways programme, with a follow up event organised by the Committee at the end of the year.

The impact of welfare cuts on women: The Committee have set up UNISON welfare clinics and workshops across various branches. These have attracted major support from members. Agnes Frazer was also a guest speaker at one of the Committee meetings and provided a detailed account of the changes to the welfare system and the challenges that lay ahead particularly the abhorrent 'rape clause' and the 2 – child tax credit cap.

Women in prisons: Over the past year Committee members have completed 3 sessions of the Health and history course with women prisoners at Hydebank. Additional members are now trained as lay tutors to take part in these sessions.

Violence against women: The Committee continues to monitor and promote UNISON's domestic violence programme. Trained UNISON women stewards continue to provide domestic abuse support to staff across Health Trusts. The Committee is monitoring the success of the project and developing a new initiative with Onus. Pamela Dooley and Roberta Magee presented our progress to a fringe meeting at NDC 2017. Roberta and Pamela also held an updating workshop with our own committee. A working group and programme of work has been agreed for the coming year.

Campaigns & demonstrations: Throughout the year Committee members continued to play a full and active role in UNISON demonstrations. We have been actively involved in the public marches and demonstrations in support of the campaign for a living wage, Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI), the 2-child cap on child benefits (rape clause) and the May Day rally. The Committee also linked in with the WASPI campaign in NI and met with Councillors, MLAs and MPs at Belfast City Hall in May 2017.



■ LGBT Group

The LGBT Group has 119 registered members representing 20 branches across NI. Since 2016 Regional Council, the Group has had 3 meetings with an average attendance of 8 members.

The focus of the Group this year has been to promote visibility and inclusive workplaces, engage branches and campaign on marriage equality. The Group secured some funding from the GPF which enabled us to run additional events and have resources for campaigns. During the year Group members Martin McConnellogue and Gillian Foley featured in the Out in UNISON magazine public service champions profiles. We sent out eleven editions of our LGBT ebulletin to members as well as Out in UNISON and Pride programmes.

Campaigning for Marriage Equality

Love Equality which comprises of ICTU, Amnesty NI, Student Movement and LGBT organisations hosted a rally on 1st July in Belfast City Centre. The purpose was to profile the refusal of the Assembly to legislate for marriage equality, garner wide public support and send a clear message to politicians within

the political vacuum which exists. Over 20,000 people attended with a huge contingent from UNISON and we were well featured in media coverage.

Photo Frame Campaign – We had photo frames made supporting Marriage Equality and they proved popular at Pride, in workplaces and trade union events. We have over 500 photos with our frame on our LGBT Facebook and encouraged people to tag themselves. This facilitated increased exposure and is an ongoing campaign.

Stand Up for Marriage Equality Comedy Night – This was our main Belfast Pride event and featured in the programme. We organised volunteers from the LGBT community to take part in their first ever stand up set at comedy workshops. The event attracted over 150 people and raised £600 which was split between Belfast Pride and Love Equality.

Engaging with the Wider LGBT Community & Branches

LGBT Awareness Week in May: We organised four events which included a Health & Wellbeing Day in UNISON Derry Office in partnership with the Rainbow Project.

Over 100 people attended and there were 12 organisations with stalls. In Derry, UNISON Community Branch supported a fundraising disco and cabaret and over £300 was raised for Foyle Pride.

In Belfast we ran two workshops as part of our Member Learning Programme which were open to non members. These were 'Advanced Care Planning for LGBT People' and 'Supporting Young Trans People in School and Youth Settings'. UNISON was included in the information which was circulated widely in the LGBT Community and we used Facebook and Twitter to promote each event.

Pride Festivals - UNISON had a great presence at Belfast Pride which was very well supported by members. For the first time we had a float in the parade. The theme was Being Out at Work which featured members in work uniforms, their children and our marriage equality couple – Gillian and Sam. There was fantastic engagement from branches and staff to plan and decorate the float and feedback was very positive. As part of the Foyle Pride Festival the Community Voluntary branch sponsored the Football v Homophobia event. Members were well represented at both the Foyle and Newry Pride Parades.

Art Competition – This competition was supported by our GPF bid on the theme of Pride & Visibility and attracted over 40 works of art from throughout the UK and Ireland. 16 pieces were selected for the exhibition which were run to coincide with the various Pride festivals – Queens Film Theatre in Belfast, Holywell Trust in Derry and the Newry Rainbow Centre. The original intention was for the exhibition to be hosted by local hospitals but some of the pictures contravened their policies so we had to find alternative accommodation.

The exhibition was formally opened in Derry by one of the local Councillors and our chair Martin McConnellogue also spoke.

LGBT Staff Forum Hospital Stalls – In July & August we organised LGBT stalls in Linenhall St and nine hospitals - the Royal, Mater, Belfast City, Ulster, Lagan Valley, Antrim, Causeway, Altnagelvin and Daisy Hill. Many branches

helped out on the day and the Ulster Hospital branch ran a whole week of visibility. We gave away over 900 rainbow lanyards and 200 LGBT posters to promote inclusive workplaces and encourage staff to support the local Pride festivals.



LGBT Staff Forum Online Gallery – A gallery of HSC staff who are out at work was launched over the summer. UNISON was involved in encouraging staff who are out at work to participate in the Forum online gallery and the majority of those who are featured are members.

Queer Activist Group - In September over 30 LGBT people attended the first meeting of a newly formed Queer Activist Group which was hosted by UNISON. The focus is to re-engage with grassroots activism across a range of issues such as visibility, the experience of young people in schools, mental health and the homophobic/transphobic political narrative which exists in NI. We will continue to support this group through promotion and facilitating a venue and refreshments.

US Boston College Learning Trip & Follow Up LGBT Safe Housing Project - UNISON LGBT Chair Martin McConnellogue was selected for a programme in May travelling to Massachusetts and South Carolina which was organised by Boston College. One initiative which was visited was a Homeless project at Harvard University where staff were all trained in appropriate language and work closely with LGBT services around the Boston area. When Martin returned home he discussed the idea with colleagues and saw the potential for replicating the project in Derry.

He met with the Council for the Homeless as well as senior managers in First Housing Aid and Support Services (FHASS) and local LGBT organisations to develop a local model. The FHASS LGBT Safe Housing Scheme was launched in September. This included protocols for staff and a visible window sticker indicating that this is a safe space for LGBT people. A training programme for staff to assure that they are skilled to deal with LGBT

issues and signpost has been developed and is currently being rolled out.

Policy: UNISON has submitted a response to the Health Service Gender Identity and Expression Employment Policy consultation. In the response we welcomed the introduction of this new policy, commenting on some aspects and advocating for an inclusive approach to transgender people in the workplace.

■ Disability Group

The Group has met three times this year but despite our high profile leafleting campaign last year, we still have minority branch participation. This issue has been considered by Regional Committee who have now recommended the following action:

- a membership survey to identify UNISON members eligible to participate, and to identify issues for the negotiating agenda.
- Regional Organisers to hold sessions with all branches to agree action plans to raise

awareness of disability issues affecting our members and to identify participants;

- special accessibility measures to ensure that the Group can meet regularly.

UNISON has produced comprehensive publications on the rights of our members with disabilities. These will be incorporated into the 2018 activist education programme.

■ Black and Migrant Workers' Group

The Black and Migrant Workers (BMW) group has met bi-monthly since last Regional Council. Membership of the Group has again increased. The majority of members continue to be migrant workers, reflecting the composition of the workforce in NI.

Communications: The group continues to meet bi-monthly and send e-bulletins to all black and migrant worker members and to branches after each meeting.

Conferences and events: A full delegation attended Black Members Conference in January 2017 and the UNISON motion on 'Access to immigration advice and representation' was approved unanimously.

The motion called for immigration advice and representation to be included in membership services / legal services rather than continue to be an "ad hoc extra" through a weekly phone help line. The delegation also

produced a conference report that was circulated to all our BMW members.



In March 2017 Natalie Muir represented our group at an Anti Racism rally organised in London.

One Day Without Us: In February 2017, UNISON members joined the "1 Day Without Us" celebration. This was a UK wide initiative that emerged following the EU referendum to celebrate the contribution of migrants.

It coincided with UN World Day of Social Justice and was also marked by a mass lobby in Westminster to ensure EU migrants' rights were not used as bargaining chips in the EU exit negotiations.

We had lively stalls in Craigavon Hospital, Antrim Area Hospital and Belfast Royal Hospital. A delegation also went to City Hall under the ICTU banner "Migrants make us richer".



Supporting Refugees: Our region continues to support refugees and asylum seekers through a number of initiatives in conjunction with the education team.

Firstly, referrals from refugee support organisations to our English IELTS classes and to our Immigration advice clinics have been steadily increasing. This has allowed us develop closer contacts with a number of asylum seekers who came from a medical background and will hopefully be able to work in the health sector.

Some of the students are nurses but others are also surgeons, doctors, pharmacists. All are trying to find their way through the many hurdles that will face them before being allowed to practice their profession here.

The Group was involved in the event organised by the education team about refugees at home and abroad. The event went very well and gave an opportunity for the refugees attending the English class to share their stories and make some contacts with branch activists. Again the issue for medically trained asylum seekers was raised and members from hospital branches were particularly interested in the links that could be made at a branch / local level.

In July 2017, this then led to a scoping exercise that was organised with the Department of Health and HR from the Belfast Trust inviting those with qualifications in medicine, nursing and allied health (physios, radiography, pharmacists, etc.) to an information session in Belfast City Hospital.

The event was very successful and direct contact has been established between the Trust and the individual doctors and nurses concerned. New opportunities for placement, local training, volunteering and adaptation courses are currently being explored by UNISON and Trust HR.

In late 2016 our group was also involved in supporting organisations and asylum seekers asking the Irish government to scrap the Direct Provision system in place in the South of Ireland which puts asylum seekers in quasi detention conditions.

EU Exit: The group is involved in a coalition looking at the effect of EU Exit on migrant workers living here. This led to a petition asking the Irish Government to allow access to Irish citizenship for people with a permanent 'right to reside' and 'indefinite leave to remain' in NI. Currently while local people can opt for Irish or British citizenship, this option is not open to migrants who need to go down the citizenship route.

IELTS English Exam: Despite various overseas recruitment drives from the Trusts and the private sector in Europe, India and the Philippines very few nurses have been successfully brought in. The hurdle of the IELTS English exam (where they need to score 7 out of 9 in all sections) remains the main obstacle for overseas nurses.

Our group has been campaigning, submitting motions to UNISON conferences and sending petitions / letters to the NMC, asking for a reduction of the IELTS criteria (or ideally access to a different, more tailored test such as the Australian Occupational English Test).

Since the IELTS criteria started to apply to European nurses, the NMC faced a reduction of around 96% in the number of European

nurses gaining registration. This has contributed to the campaign gaining momentum and the petition we had been supporting through Change.org has finally “gone viral” jumping from a few hundred to 15,000 signatures. The NMC are in the process of revising the criteria at the time of writing this report.

Other activities: Once again the Migrant workers group was involved in all other UNISON activities throughout the year.

- Another Belonging Project exhibition and workshop was organised to mark International Women’s Day and beautiful portraits of migrant women hung around the UNISON office third floor for the whole month of March.
- The group held stalls at various events such as the Onam festival in September.
- Natalie Muir (Northern Branch) received an award for outstanding new steward at the Organising Awards ceremony.
- Flora Alfanti was involved in reception parties in Craigavon to welcome and sign up newly arrived Filipino nurses who have come to work in the Southern Trust.

Immigration advice clinic: Our immigration advice clinic has been very busy all year. The arrangement with Stephen Hollywood from Arcolaw solicitors put in place last Autumn has worked very well and every clinic is fully

booked. Booking slots have been reduced to 20 min to accommodate the extra number of travel document queries. Every month, the clinic is filled with queries from UNISON members and regular referrals from refugee support organisations.



English classes: Our English classes remain very successful. The afternoon class (General English) had a much smaller attendance this year, but the IELTS preparation (evening class) is reaching full capacity. Again the classes comprise of a mixture of UNISON members and Refugees / Asylum Seekers.

Table 9: English classes

Course	Total	Men	Women
General English	10	4	6
IELTS preparation	20	12	8

Special issue groups

■ Retired Members’ Forum

The Retired Members Forum met 3 times this year. The Forum has 48 members and its composition currently stands at 71% women.

Recruitment and organising: The Forum continues to offer its services to branches to assist in recruitment and organising campaigns.

Public service cuts: Forum members continue to participate in all UNISON rallies, strikes and demonstrations in opposition to cuts in public services, the welfare state and pensions. Members have continued to

distribute UNISON information on this issue across wider trade union structures and community networks.

Campaigns and lobbying: The Forum has continued to campaign and lobby on a series of key UNISON priorities throughout the year including:

- opposing cuts in health, education, social care, and the welfare state;
- highlighting the implications of pensions reform and fuel poverty;
- domestic rates and corporation tax;
- transport and community safety;

- building relationships with the UNISON Youth Group and the ICTU Young Members Group.

Members also took part in the Women WASPI event at Belfast City Hall in May 2017.



Conferences and meetings: Members are active on a variety of UNISON, ICTU and NGO bodies and during 2017 have participated in:

- UNISON National Delegate and Retired Members Conferences;
- the National pensioner’s Convention annual Pensioners Parliament,
- local Pensioners Parliaments which brings together 200 pensioners on a wide range of campaigns and is organised by the Age Sector Platform;
- UNISON NI Regional Council and Regional Committee

The Forum issues a very comprehensive newsletter 3 times per year and hopes to organise a Retired Members Bus Run in August 2018.

The Forum members listed in Table 8 represent UNISON NI on both union bodies and external campaign initiatives. Comprehensive reports are made to the wider Forum and via the Regional Committee representative to both the Committee and Regional Council.

Table 10– Representation on structures

National UNISON Retired Members Committee	Angela Boorman
UNISON Retired Members Standing Orders Committee	Joyce Griffin
UNISON NI Regional Committee	Anna McGonigle
Age Sector Platform	Martin Gallagher, Sarah McKeown & Victor Murphy
National Pensioners Convention	Rosaleen Davidson & Martin Gallagher
ICTU Retired Members Committee	Angela Boorman & Archie Thomson
UNISON National Conference	Anne Kelly
ICTU Northern Biennial Conference	Sarah McKeown & Archie Thomson
UNISON Retired Members Conference	Martin Gallagher

■ Young Members’ Forum

The Young Members’ Forum met 5 times over the year. There has been 100% increase in young members participating and we continue to encourage more branches to engage.

National Young Members Forum: This year 10 young members attended the National Young Members Forum. Our NI delegation won the campaign competition for the first time with a campaign entitled ‘Zero Hour Too Far’. This focused on the exploitation of zero hours contracts and the overuse of agency workers. The delegation has been invited to present this at the 2017 Regional Council to support the campaign roll-out.

ICTU Conferences: Forum members continue to participate in ICTU young members’

seminars, conferences and the Youth Committee. The new ICTU campaign will have a specific role for young members across the affiliates.

Improving participation: We continue to face the problem of active group members reaching the ‘cut-off’ age. For this reason the Forum wants branches to make a special effort to ensure that young members are targeted for election as stewards and participation in the main activist education programme. By doing so we can ensure that those who reach the cut-off age are by that stage firmly embedded in the UNISON mainstream. Forum members will be taking this plan to branches from the Autumn onwards.

The Programme will include information stalls and direct contact with existing Forum members.

We also plan to conduct a survey of young members to identify their interests, problems and ideas for expansion of our Forum.

■ Health & Safety Group

The Regional Health and Safety Group resumed its meetings in April 2017 following the return to work of Nuala Conlon.

Conferences and committees. In July 2017, a number of Health and Safety Officers from various branches attended the successful Hazards Conference in Stoke on Trent. Discussions are currently taking place to hold the biennial national health & safety seminar in Belfast in early 2018.

Barbara Martin continues to chair the NIC/ICTU health and safety committee. She was also nominated as 'All Ireland member of the European Committee on Health & Safety' which is due to meet in Brussels in Nov 17.

Training: The Group is undertaking a programme to encourage stewards to attend health and safety training. This has already produced positive results with 60 attending to date in 2017.

Workplan: The Group's workplan includes:

- The organisation of a regional health & safety seminar focusing on mental health, and stress issues at work. Recent information published by the BMA indicates that 1 in 3 of the working population experience serious mental health issues, and stress at work. We aim to hold this event to coincide with Workers Memorial Day in April 2018;

- To continue to encourage stewards in all branches to attend Health & Safety training;
- To expand the Group by encouraging participation from all branches;
- To support health & safety officers to continue carrying out inspections in the workplace;
- To publicising the new UNISON Stress Tool Kit to be launched nationally in November 2017.

Workers memorial day: On April 27th 2017 Group members attended the wreath laying event at the Memorial Tree in the grounds of Stormont together with colleagues from other unions.

HSE/ICTU safety rep award: Pat Neeson, Health and Safety Officer Royal Hospitals branch, received the Highly Commended award in the HSE/ICTU Health and Safety Representative Awards 2017. We received positive media attention in some of the Belfast press.



Service groups

Our two service groups are the Health Service Group (covering all health care workers in the public and private sectors) and our Local Government and Education Group (covering the entire education service, local government and other public bodies).

Regional Committee has encouraged stronger co-operation between the service groups, self-organised groups and special interest groups to ensure that equality issues in particular are a central focus of UNISON bargaining in all sectors.

The work of the service groups and related lay structures is reported in detail in Section 2.

Health Service Group: There are 47 members of the Health Service Group representing 17 branches. Its composition currently stands at 63% women. The group has met 4 number of times since last Regional Council and is fully functioning.

Local Government and Education Service Group: There are 20 members of the Local Government and Education Service Group representing 10 branches. Its composition currently stands at 75% women. The group has met 3 times since last Regional Council and is fully functioning.

Social Care Forum: There are 17 members of the Forum representing 9 number of branches. Its composition currently stands at 100% women and is fully functioning.

Nurses Forum: There are 28 members of the Forum representing 16 branches. Its composition currently stands at 78% women and is fully functioning.

Homecare Steering Group: There are 11 members of the Group representing 10 branches. Its composition currently stands at 82% women. The group has met 4 number of times since last Regional Council and is fully functioning.

National representation

UNISON NI is represented by a wide range of activists on UNISON national structures

The Regional Committee thanks all our reps for their work throughout the year.

Table 11– UNISON national structures

NI REPRESENTATIVES	
UNISON President	Margaret McKee
NEC	Margaret McKee, Lucia McKeever, Alastair Long
Local Govt Service Group Executive	Gabrielle Carton and Daphne Harper
Local Govt Sector Committees	Irene Graham and Maggie Montgomery
Health Service Group Executive	Roberta Magee, Maura McKenna and Jill Weir
Health Sector Committees	Ambulance – Alistair Long’ Operational Services –John Murray; Nursing – Eoin Stewart; Science & Technical – Stephen McNeill
Higher Education	Vacant as a result of privatisation
Women’s Committee	Roberta Magee and Irene Graham
Disability Committee	Gillian Foley
LGBT	Emmeline Kingsley Grace; Martin McConnellogue
National Young Members Forum	Sinead Liddy (term of office ended July 2017)
Health and Safety	Claire Martin
National Black Members Committee	Flora Alfante; Natalie Muir
National Retired Members	Angela Boorman

Developing membership services

The UNISON College

This is the second year of our combined Trade Union Education, Lifelong Learning Programme and our Continuing Professional Development Programme now being delivered under the banner of the UNISON College.

Over the past year we offered 172 courses/workshops which engaged 1814 participants. This included 73 courses for UNISON activists and members designed to build on trade union values and principles and to develop the skills and confidence necessary to effectively organise, negotiate, represent and campaign. These courses ranged from half day to three day modules which attracted 717 participants of whom 81% were women. Many elements of this part of the programme are open to activists and members alike.

Our member learning programme which offers courses on personal development and continuing professional development is primarily aimed at members but is also open to all elected UNISON representatives. This part of the programme offered 99 workshops attended by 1097 learners. In addition, 117 completed the Level 4 Open University K101 Introduction to health & social care module to June 2017 and a further 127 learners are registered for the programme to June 2018.

We developed a new format for our Education Programme and increased our online access with the ability to book via the website. This is proving popular.

While the majority of our courses take place in the UNISON centres in Belfast and Derry, we have offered training in Coleraine,

Ballymena, Enniskillen, Antrim, Armagh, Newry, Downpatrick and Omagh.

ICTU have continued to deliver courses from the South Eastern Regional College which has provided accreditation for our 6-day Organising Stewards, Health & Safety and Union Learning Rep training. In order to offer it as an accredited course, a minimum number of participants is required.



We have had very positive feedback from ICTU's short courses on employment law and equality which are run in partnership with the Equality Commission and Labour Relations Agency. We hope to encourage more participation from UNISON activists in the coming year.

The Organising Steward: We have trained 93 new stewards to date on our Organising Steward Module 1 and 2 and 49 achieved their accreditation. For operational reasons the number of sessions was reduced by 4, but given the increase throughout the year in the steward base additional sessions are planned before the end of 2017. The percentage of women stewards trained to date has increased to 81%.

Stewards now have to complete Module 1 and 2 within the same cohort and this has reduced flexibility.

To increase flexibility, and to meet the needs of stewards in the private sector, community & voluntary sector, and schools, we are developing a 10-session evening Organising Steward 1 and 2 course. This will require outreach and strong co-operation from the relevant branches.

Developing representation skills: There was good participation across courses such as Case Representation, Sickness Absence and Supporting Staff Impacted by Domestic Abuse with 93 participants. In addition a number of branch based refresher sessions were offered by staff and by lay activists within branches.

Negotiation, campaigning and equality: We offered a range of courses designed to equip our activists on the use of equality tools; understanding the Assembly; developing campaigns; and agitating for political change. 46 activists and members undertook the training. The benefits are reflected in a wide range of activity subsequently undertaken by participating branches. We have also developed a three day Understanding Power and Challenging Sectarianism module.

ICTU and employers will shortly launch a revamped version of the original Joint Declaration which outlawed sectarianism in the workplace. We are negotiating for joint training across the public sector, but in the meantime will be inviting senior activists to undertake the UNISON training which Regional Committee has identified as mandatory.

Partnership training: A new element of our programme is training for the UNISON-led workplace partnerships. 3 sessions have been held to date. The figures reflect UNISON members but the programme also includes some of the managers involved in the partnerships. This programme will now move from general partnership training to specific training for each partnership project.



Health & safety: Our programme to train new health and safety activists and retrain existing ones continues. We have completed 5 module 1 courses and 3 module 2 courses to date and we continue to successfully grow the numbers of women health and safety representatives. Our linked training courses on health, safety and well-being attracted 121 participants.

This year saw the introduction of three new topics to support activists who are dealing with members in very challenging situations around mental health, suicide awareness and to recognise and develop their own resilience. These were activist only sessions to enable participants to have the freedom to reflect on cases they have dealt with. There was a very good response to the Suicide Awareness course as the Royal Hospitals branch prioritised it and incorporated it into one of their branch meeting days.

Branch officer training: We have expanded our branch officer training with almost 100 branch officers completing one of 12 sessions across a range of posts and relevant topics. We successfully ran the first accredited Union Learning Rep course in a number of years. We offered a new workshop on social media and continue to offer Finance & The Organised Branch to support branch committees on the new approach to activity based budgeting.

Development education for women activists: 102 women activists and members participated in our women's development programme.

Pathways continues to be a key route for new and aspiring women activists to develop knowledge, skills and confidence with 36 women completing it. The mix of newly trained stewards and women members who have expressed an interest in becoming more involved works very well.

A new Pathways Recall day was organised which enabled participants to reflect on how they have utilised their learning to date and identify areas for development. We received positive feedback on this and it will be included in our 2018 programme.

We will now expand the Building Confidence courses and we are currently working on new training modules on:

- women and pensions arising from the WASPI campaign,
- reproductive rights, and
- the menopause as a workplace issue.

These final two modules will build on the workplace survey on abortion scheduled to be launched in October and on the exciting campaign by the Wales Women's TUC on menopause as a trade union issue.

Our women's lobbying courses will also focus on securing legislation on domestic violence similar to that which has now been implemented by the Wales Assembly.

Developing leadership: We held 5 workshops on leadership, effective communication and emotional intelligence in the workplace with the aim of encouraging new leaders, but also supporting existing union leaders. The courses attracted 37 participants – 31 of which were women.

Partnering with self-organised groups: We jointly hosted a number of workshops in partnership with our Self Organising

Groups. These included a lecture on Marie Stopes with the Women's Committee, a session on refugees with our Black & Migrant Workers group, a Global Solidarity course with our Solidarity committee and two workshops with our LGBT groups.

Member development and lifelong learning programme: The trade union education and skills element of the programme is open to all members and covers a wide range of topics such as professional registration, personal well-being, leadership at work, promoting best practice in specialist areas, interview skills for specific occupational groups and planning for retirement. Feedback from organisers and workplace reps on the programme as a recruitment tool is consistently positive.



To support members with new NISCC and NMC regulatory requirements we offered 32 sessions across 18 locations. These workshops were targeted at home care, care home, day care staff as well as nurses in acute and community settings. Joe Lynch was instrumental in developing a bespoke UNISON guide for NISCC regulated members which sat alongside our workshops. The NISCC programme was rolled out by staff and lay activists across NI and was a very successful way of engaging home care staff.

This year we also ran Interview Skills for School Support Staff. Some of these were hosted by schools in response to upcoming recruitment processes. While the numbers were small, it supported recruitment in those schools.

We also offered Interview Skills for the Open University Nursing Programme in each Trust area which engaged 69 members, many of whom successfully gained a place on the course. These will be our nursing workforce of the future, our home grown members supported by their union to help alleviate the current crisis.

The number of workshops and the figure of over 1000 participants is a big increase on the previous year despite the fact that 18% of workshops offered were cancelled due to low numbers and we still struggle with no-shows on the day – often due to staff shortages. We have put additional measures in place in relation to participant reminders and follow up. For 2018, we are reconsidering the volume and breadth of the workshops and may consolidate.

Union Learning Fund: During the year UNISON continued to deliver successfully on the Union Learning Fund outcomes, surpassing many of the targets. We received £35,000 and this supports key areas of the member learning programme including Open University provision and member workshops. In addition to directly funding courses, it acts as leverage to secure external funding. Over the past 12 months we have supported members to access over £70,000 worth of education grants and £40,000 in employer match funding with a further £20,000 from the Department of Health.

Essential skills: Essential skills programmes have continued in the Western, Northern, South Eastern and Belfast Trusts. However, numbers have been low apart from those which have been embedded into QCF qualifications. We have promoted Essential Skills widely and directed members to their local colleges. The numeracy courses have proved popular particularly by those who wish to apply for the pre-reg nursing programme.

Open University: The K101 Introduction to Health & Social Care module continues to offer our members a real opportunity to

progress into new roles. 117 people from all Trusts completed the OU K101 Introduction to Health & Social Care in June 2017. This continues to give us the highest retention and pass rate in the UK. Some of the learners secured places on the pre-reg nursing programme which commenced in October. Others are continuing study with the Open University working towards degree programmes or to gain sufficient credits to apply to QUB or UU.



Recruitment for the 2017/18 intake was advertised in May and 222 applications were received, a 75% increase in previous years. Significant time has been put into supporting those applicants to process their applications.

Unfortunately the Trusts were not able to contribute any funding this year due to the cutbacks and the grant process transferred to Student Finance NI which added a complex layer of bureaucracy for those on lower household incomes.

While we were able to redirect some applicants to credit transfer, we had to turn down 70 applicants due to a lack of funding. However, even with that we have 127 students registered, 85% of whom identify as bands 1-3.

UNISON also promoted the K117 Advancing Your Healthcare Practice which is the second module in the pre-reg nursing programme and the Department of Health made funding available to enable those who complete to apply to enter the nursing programme at Year 2. As a result 43 of our members who completed K101 with us last year gained places. This module is £2500 so is too expensive to undertake on a self funded basis.

Table 12: UNISON College trade union education by course and main topic, 2016/17

Course	No. of Sessions	No of Student Places		
		Total	M	F
STEWARDS INDUCTION TRAINING				
The Organising Steward (Module 1)	3	44	6	38
The Organising Steward (Module 2)	4	49	12	37
Total	7	93	18	75
STEWARDS & REPRESENTATION				
Developing case representation skills	4	28	5	23
Representing members at sickness absence	2	20	9	11
Representing members in bullying cases	2	15	7	8
Supporting staff impacted by domestic abuse	2	30	1	29
Total	10	93	22	71
NEGOTIATING AND CAMPAIGNING				
Developing a campaign for change	2	7	2	5
Agitating for political change	1	7	1	6
Partnership training	3	25	8	17
Understanding The Assembly	1	10	4	6
Total	7	49	15	34
EQUALITY TRAINING				
Using equality laws to challenge	2	13	2	11
Supporting transgender young people in school and youth organisations	1	9	2	7
Total	3	22	4	18
HEALTH & SAFETY - REPS				
Health & safety Module 1	5	59	21	38
Health & safety Module 2	3	25	12	13
Total	8	84	33	51
HEALTH & SAFETY & WELLBEING				
Dealing with bullying at work	2	21	3	18
Dealing with stress	3	33	4	29
Suicide awareness training	1	8	1	7
ASSIST suicide intervention training	1	18	3	15
Mental health first aid for activists	1	7	1	6
Suicide awareness for activists	1	22	5	17
Foundations of personal resilience	1	12	1	11
Total	10	121	18	103
BRANCH OFFICER TRAINING - COMMUNICATIONS				
Using social media in your branch	1	7	4	3
Media training	1	5	1	4
Writing effective press releases	1	5	1	4
Branch chairs	1	7	1	6
Total	4	24	7	17

Course	No. of Sessions	No of Student Places		
		Total	M	F
BRANCH OFFICER TRAINING - WELFARE				
Branch welfare officers	1	8	0	8
Payplan for welfare officers	1	9	0	9
Branch H&S officers	1	9	4	5
Total	3	26	4	22
BRANCH OFFICER TRAINING - FINANCE				
Branch Treasurer OLBA training	1	7	2	5
Finance & the organised branch	2	19	2	17
Total	3	26	4	22
BRANCH OFFICER TRAINING – UNISON EDUCATION				
Promoting education in your Branch	1	11	2	9
Union Learning Reps	1	10	3	7
Total	2	21	5	16
DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION FOR WOMEN				
Pathways	3	36	0	36
Pathways Recall	1	9	0	9
Building Confidence for women	2	13	0	13
Women's health & history	2	36	0	36
Marie Stopes Lecture	1	8	0	8
Total	9	102	0	102
BUILDING NEW LEADERS & UPDATING EXISTING LEADERS				
Everyone can be a leader	1	4	0	4
Effective communication	2	14	1	13
Emotional intelligence in the workplace	1	9	1	8
Total	5	37	6	31
SOLIDARITY				
Understanding global inequality and social justice	1	5	0	5
Understanding Islam	1	10	3	7
Refugees at home and abroad	1	14	5	9
Total	3	29	8	21
TOTAL	73	717	140(19%)	577 (81%)
2015/16	58	682	160 (23%)	522 (77%)

Table 13: UNISON College member development and lifelong learning by course and main topic, 2016/17

Course	No. of Sessions	No of Student Places		
		Total	M	F
Protecting professional registration				
NISCC - Protecting You & Your Registration	18	110	7	103
NMC Professional Accountability and Record Keeping	1	5	2	3
Revalidation for Nurses	7	42	3	39
Clinical Effectiveness for Nurses	2	15	0	15
Reflection – Professional necessity	1	8	0	8
Supporting yourself and others				
Bereavement	3	21	3	18
Foundations of Personal Resilience	1	12	1	11
Managing Challenging Conversations	1	8	0	8
Getting stuff done: Being more productive	1	7	2	5
Mental Health First Aid	1	9	3	6
Mindfulness	5	77	6	71
Power of Positive Thinking	1	15	2	13
Resilient Leadership	1	6	0	6
Supporting you in your job				
Acute Head Injury: Recognition and Early Management	1	9	1	8
Autism	6	162	33	129
Caring for a Person on Oxygen Therapy	1	8	0	8
Caring for a Person with Gastrostomy Tube	1	10	1	9
Creating and maintaining support	1	3	0	3
Dementia	10	141	13	128
Infection Control	3	28	2	26
Learning Disability and Challenging Behaviour	2	19	2	17
Medication Administration - The Importance of Accuracy	1	8	2	6
OT Practice Event	1	31	5	26
Palliative Care	7	71	7	64
Patient Safety - The Role of the Human Factor	1	13	1	12
Promoting Good Stoma Care	2	18	0	18
Role of the Nurse in a Recovery Ward	1	10	0	10
Sepsis	1	13	0	13
Valuing the Contribution of the Theatre Support Worker	1	0	0	0
Wound Care	2	38	2	36
Interview skills				
Interview Skills for Health & Social Care	1	20	3	17
Interview Skills for OU Nursing	6	69	14	55
Interview Skills for School Support Staff	3	20	0	20
Advance Care Planning for LGBT People & Partners	1	7	0	7
Planning for Retirement				
Planning for Retirement	2	56	18	38
Total	98	1089	133	956

Partnerships and representation

In each Trust local UNISON reps are involved in education/learning groups. The nature of these does vary from Trust to Trust and UNISON has a number of seats on each one. These partnership are serviced by local branch reps. However, the 'partnership of equals' which we originally established now needs to be restored and the partnerships need to comprise of UNISON Union Learning Reps (ULRs) and Education Officers. We have commenced work to bring this change about. The focus of these partnerships is widening participation and developing new pathways for staff to progress.

UNISON is also represented on a number of external bodies relating to learning and career development including:

- NI Social Care Council Working Group on HSC qualifications;
- Northern Trust Support Workers Learning & Development Group; DoH Workforce Development;
- Regional End of Life Care learning group;
- DHSSPS Domiciliary Care Workforce Development group.



Communication

The new slimmer format for the course programme was well received and the printed A4 Member Learning Programme was used distributed in hard copy and by email. Each month all joiners received a welcome email from the Education team notifying them of the available courses.

Courses are promoted on the main UNISON Facebook page and a bespoke Education Facebook page has been set up. The education section on the UNISON NI website has a function where members can apply online which was well used. Branches were also very active in promoting the courses via social media.

Open University

Open University: K101 was delivered across five Trusts supported by the UNISON study skills programme and paid release from employers.

Essential Skills Literacy, Numeracy & ICT: Essential Skills through IT and Essential Skills Numeracy courses have continued to run with Western Trust, Belfast Trust and Northern Trust.

Table 14 - Open University Courses

K101 Open University	Sept 2016 – June 2017	Sept 2017 – June 2018
Belfast Trust	29	35
Western Trust	20	21
Southern Trust	31	23
Northern Trust	16	19
South Eastern Trust	21	29
Total	117	127

■ Courses run through employers

Table 15 highlights courses run through the employers with the majority of staff receiving release to attend.

These courses are open to all employees, not just UNISON members.

Table 15– Courses run through employers

Workplace	Essential Skills (ES) Programmes Oct 2016 – Oct 2017	Students
Belfast Trust	5 x ES Literacy 1 x ES Numeracy	44
Western Trust	2 x ES Literacy 1 x ES Numeracy	33
Northern Trust	2 x ES Numeracy 3 x ES Literacy	53
South Eastern Trust	3x ES Literacy	36
Total		166

There for you - Welfare services

UNISON NI Welfare Group: The Group met twice this year with 11 branches participating. With 35 members (75% women) the Group has successfully encouraged more branch welfare officers to attend meetings in order to share information and good practice. The AGM is scheduled for 27th November.

During 2017, the Group encouraged a large number of branches to use UNISON welfare services. It received a presentation from Agnes on the impact of welfare reform and members attended a There For You Payplan debt management information session in Galway House in September.

The Group congratulates new UNISON President Margaret McKee on being elected as a Welfare Trustee for UNISON NI. It also supported Committee members Margretta Chambers and Irene Newton who took part in the UNISON There For You 40km/3 day Catalan Pyrenean Challenge walk to raise much needed funds for this vital service. The former Octopus lottery is due to be re-launched at end of 2017 and the Committee will be encouraging branches to sign up to this excellent fundraiser.

Winter Fuel Grants: Regional Committee is pleased to report a further increase in the total amount of grants payable during the

period from £17,801.99 last year to £31,950 this year. There have been 104 grant applications for fuel grants to date, a 52% rise in the 66 grants reported last year. In addition, 68 applications for school uniform grants were made – up from 56 last year.

Table 16 – Winter Fuel Grant Report, 2016/ 2017

Branch	No.
Belfast City Hospital Trust	2
Belfast Education	30
Craigavon	4
Derry Education	1
Down & Lisburn	3
Down Education	10
Foyle Health	2
Green Park Health	1
Community & Voluntary	2
Mater Hospital Trust	2
N & W Belf Community & MAH	8
Newry & Mourne Health	5
Northern Health	7
Omagh/Fermanagh Health	5
Orchard Health and Social Care	1
Royal Hospital Trust	4
South and East Belfast Health	3
Southern Education	6
Sperrin/Devenish Education	5
Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust	3
TOTAL	104

UNISON Living - Financial Services

New flyers and literature was received and distributed for the newly branded UNISON Living.

LV visited the region in February and June 2017. They currently hold 233 policies for NI which represents another year on year increase. They contacted every branch at least once by email and arranged some sponsorship for the Newry & Mourne branch 'There for you' sponsored walk in support of UNISON welfare.

Vauxhall send literature directly to branches.

UIA visited NI once in 2017. They have signed 102 new policies this year and report 1,138 live policies in the region. This represents a 1% year on year increase.

Abbey Insurance were very active within the region in 2016/2016, attending 37 AGM meetings and a number of other recruitment events in branches. In addition, they met with all Fighting Fund Organisers. This has resulted in the following policies:

- Motor – 4784
- Home – 828
- Travel – 69

This is a year on year increase in motor and travel insurance but a slight decrease in home insurance

UNISON Living

Stewart Travel continues to be the endorsed company for all UNISON travel.

Lighthouse have hosted 27 events in the region with 215 attendees. In addition they conducted 113 individual appointments. They now have a team of 4 advisors living and working in NI looking after our members

171 UNISON Health & Dental plans are covered in NI, this represents a year on year increase.



Legal services

The following is an update report from our solicitors Thompsons to the end of August 2017 on cases and activity.



■ UNISON Personal Injury Cases From Sept 2016 to Aug 2017

Table 17 - UNISON Personal Injury Cases from Sept 2016 to Aug 2017

	2015-2016	2016-2017
Cases received	212	205
Cases closed	192	193
Cases won	98	106
Cases lost	7	0
Cases discontinued/turned down	60	63
Cases where no contact from client	27	24
Turnaround time average	16 months	18 months
Damages	£673,509	£1,002,447
Average Damages	£6,873	£9,457

The following are some notable outcomes:

- **£8,000 for Catering Assistant.** The member received damages for injuries sustained when they tripped over a cable during the course of their employment with the Education Authority.
- **£5,000 for Ambulance Station Supervisor.** The member sustained whiplash type injuries following an RTA.
- **£15,000 for Nurse.** The member sustained injuries to their right knee when they fell.
- **£47,000 for Care Assistant.** The member sustained injuries when they were assaulted by a patient during the course of their employment with a Care Trust.
- **£23,000 for Catering Assistant.** The member received an injury when they slipped on a wet floor.
- **£3,000 for Cook.** The member suffered from carbon monoxide poisoning during the course of their employment with the Northern Trust.
- **£37,000 for Nursing Auxiliary.** The member lost part of their finger on a faulty gate during the course of their employment with the Northern Trust.
- **£3,750 for Support Service Worker.** The member sustained a needlestick injury during the course of their employment with the Western Trust.

■ Employment Rights

In common with all offices of Thompsons Solicitors in the UK, Thompsons NI has an Employment Rights (ER) Unit in its Belfast office staffed by solicitors who specialise in employment and discrimination law and provide a range of services to support the work of union officials as below:

Advice to Officials: Advice and assistance is provided to full-time officials in dealing with industrial relations, employment law, and discrimination issues in the workplace.

Advice to Members: Where appropriate, advice is provided directly to members when they are referred by a full-time official.

Individual Cases: A number of more complex cases including discrimination cases are

referred to the ER team to provide representation at Tribunal or in court. Cases in the last year include:

- A private sector health professional settled an unfair dismissal case for £1,300.
- A private sector receptionist settled an unfair dismissal/unauthorised deduction from wages/breach of contract claim for £4,115.58.
- A private sector nursery assistant settled her unfair dismissal and disability discrimination case for £9,000.

■ Extended legal services, training and events

Free wills service: 68 members availed of the Free Wills Service. Solicitors attended a number of branch functions to advise on free wills.

Criminal Law: Criminal Representation was provided for members at police stations facing both work (e.g. fraud) and non-work (e.g. road traffic) criminal allegations. For those charged, representation was provided at Court where required.

Conveyancing: a reduced price conveyancing service was provided to members.

Advice Service: Legal advice was provided to individual members on a range of matters including family law and property matters. Surgeries were operated from Derry, Coleraine, Ballymena, Portadown, Omagh and Newry to enable members from outside the Greater Belfast area to access personal injury and other legal services.

Training & events: Solicitors from the ER and PI Departments act as tutors on courses organised by UNISON and provide speakers and information material for union seminars and events, including attendance at branch meetings to discuss particular aspects of union legal services.



Objective 2

Bargaining &
Bargaining
for Equality

“Negotiating and bargaining on behalf of members, and promoting equality”

Our bargaining sectors

2017 has been a very challenging year with the collapse of devolution, absence of Ministers, cuts in budgets, decline and withdrawal of services and impact on the workforce, all converging to create a substantial level of uncertainty.

The last Health Minister's new strategy entitled Delivering Together is now being driven forward in an unaccountable and contrary way by the Department of Health. Strategic and policy discussions are taking place which will have transformational impact on health services. While Trade Unions were promised a seat at the table at these discussions, there is a battle a day to monitor developments. We have very strong evidence that there is a privatisation agenda under consideration in the Department, especially within domiciliary care. Our bargaining, public policy and campaign strategies are interlinked and require us to challenge all of this at government, public body and individual employer levels.

Our key priority in 2017 was to respond to significant developments in the health and education sectors and to continue the realignment to ensure local and regional negotiating bodies reflect UNISON's bargaining priorities. These are

- Challenging privatisation
- Equality bargaining
- Pay campaigns in Health and Education
- Raising the demand for a real living wage across all sectors
- Challenging cuts to government funding to the Community and Voluntary sector
- Bargaining for recognition agreements
- Strengthening our bargaining structures inside the union and at employer level
- Participating in the new pension schemes governance bodies (both NILGOS and HSC) and developing and securing training for new lay trustees and pension board members.

Challenging privatisation in health and education: We have focused on the ever increasing privatisation of domiciliary care. The proportion of private homecare provision

is increasing. On the in-house side we have forced all Trusts to reintroduce contracted hours. In a number of Trusts we have had in-depth discussions on reconfiguration of services, some of which are still in dispute. We also met management responsible for procurement in all 5 HSC Trusts and raised demands for a return of services in-house.

In the Ambulance Trust we are engaged in both a partnership project and service review. We sought a commitment to ensure a living wage in those service providers used by the various Trusts. In the private sector we continue to recruit and to negotiate where we can, but the majority of employers are hostile and anti-trade union.



In education, UNISON is on full alert and we recognise that privatisation is a very real threat as the EA struggles with the huge budget deficit. There is a growing trend in voluntary grammar schools to withdraw from EA support services and introduce private contractors.

Pay Campaigns in Health and Education -The challenge of closing the pay deficit and the cap: In health NI workers are now 3% behind the rest of the UK and ending the break in pay parity remains our number one priority. We are also participating in the UNISON-wide 'Pay Up Now' campaign and the ICTU 'Scrap the Cap' campaign.

We recently launched a pay claim for a 5% pay rise. NI MPs and MLAs were lobbied to support the scrapping of the 1% pay cap. At the time of writing, that campaign has been successful. The next battle is to win the pay claim.

In education and local government we are lobbying employers to support the 'Pay Up Now' campaign for a 5% increase for workers covered by the NJC agreement.

Our demand for a real living wage across all sectors: In health we are pursuing a living wage claim in our procurement negotiations with Trusts and raising the issue with individual employers.

In education, UK wide negotiators are developing a strategy as part of the NJC 2017/2018 pay claim to secure the real living wage as the lowest point on the NJC pay scale. This is linked to the UNISON (England, Wales and NI) review of the Green Book and proposals around term-time working.

UNISON is also raising the living wage demand amongst community & voluntary sector employers and in the private sector. The environment for success in the community and voluntary sector is severely hampered by ongoing savage cuts.

Challenging cuts to government funding to the Community and Voluntary sector: This year has been an extremely difficult one for many of our members in the community and voluntary sector. Relevant bargaining issues are detailed later in this section. Ongoing policy and campaigning issues are outlined in Section 3.

Bargaining for recognition agreements: Our ability to secure recognition agreements is inextricably linked to building density in the employers we are organising in. The independent homecare sector is our main focus and our bargaining work is both directed and influenced by the work of our Homecare Steering Group.

Regional Organisers work closely with our specifically assigned fighting fund organisers. While membership has been growing in the targeted companies, we have yet to secure new and significant recognition in the largest of these companies. In the case of private sector nursing homes which have changed ownership, we are pursuing members' rights through TUPE.



Strengthening our bargaining structures inside the union and at employer level: Our Health Service Group has strengthened its response to regional and UNISON-wide priorities and is co-ordinating bargaining interventions at branch and JNC level across employers.

We have completed the revision of the health service group constitution and are implementing the newly agreed process for the elections to joint negotiating bodies. Team meetings of UNISON Trust JNF chairpersons, Regional Organisers and the Head of Bargaining and Representation are now organised on a regular basis.

Regional organisers now regularly attend TU Side meetings, JNF meetings with the employers and make interventions at Trust board level when required. There is a closer collaborative and team effort between senior leading lay activists and UNISON organisers.

Members of the Local Government Service Group have now taken up responsibilities inside the new EA structures, with 5 Directorates and an increased level of lay involvement in all bargaining and negotiations.

The Social Care Forum continues to respond to the Health Service group's bargaining priorities. This year the forum alongside our Homecare Steering Group, co-sponsored the publication of a UNISON Code of Conduct for Social Care Workers. This has been an important organising tool and a new resource for our members.

The Nurses Forum has felt the adverse impact of service shortages. Nursing activists have felt the full brunt of nursing staff shortfall and have had difficulty attending meetings on a regular basis. However, individual branches have renewed their focus on issues for nurses and membership continues to increase.

Representation NMC, NISSC hearings and Professional Conduct Hearings: UNISON has established a new professional representation unit under the leadership of Gail Adams. We await details of how regions will avail of this resource as the number of Cases is growing. In the interim we have established a small panel of external experts who support our casework in this area.

Bargaining for equality

In the key public sector negotiating bodies we have moved equality to the top of the negotiating agenda. However, it is increasingly clear that employers are side-stepping their statutory duties resulting in:

- unsafe staffing levels;
- casualised employment;
- emergence of zero hours contracts;
- attempts to encourage staff to volunteer on an unpaid basis;
- lack of attention to key women's health issues;
- inadequate provision for childcare and other caring responsibilities.

The absence of a government has delayed the introduction of regulations on gender pay auditing and consequently we have moved ahead with this as a bargaining demand.

In health it is increasingly clear that employer manipulation of some aspects of agenda for change, particularly for current band 1 workers, is having an adverse impact on women. Work is underway to determine the extent of the problem and to demand remedy. In the community, voluntary and private sectors, almost every issue confronting our members derives from inequality or discrimination.

Education Authority and related employers

As reported above we are engaged in high profile campaigns against cuts and in support of a living wage. However, many other issues on terms and conditions covered by the new Education Authority, including the implications of budget cuts, are now causing

Legal cases success: A significant and ongoing case is our joint application (with NIPSA) to the Industrial Tribunal seeking contractual pay for staff with 'sleep-in' obligations in their contract of employment. More than 200 UNISON members are involved. The case is fully supported by our legal department.



Our members in all sectors also face adverse impact as a result of lack of childcare provision and the cost of it where it does exist.

Women's health issues have slipped down the agenda and are now being prioritised at the bargaining table by us in response to the work of our Women's Committee. We are currently revisiting the operation of our agreements on handling domestic violence and abuse and will shortly launch new bargaining initiatives to secure agreements on the menopause and reproductive rights.

All UNISON negotiators are mandated to insist that all change management proposals are subject to Section 75 of the NI Act and are scrutinised using EQIA's.

difficulties. The collapse of devolution and the absence of a Minister continue to pose real challenges to us in teaching and support services.

UNISON is one of the largest unions among support service workers and the Head of Bargaining leads the UNISON Education Team at the Education Joint Negotiating Council.

The deficit in the Education budget of £105m is impacting on the EA workforce at their HQ and school level.

Senior lay activists engage with the 5 new EA Directorates (Finance, Operations, Human Resources, Education and Children & Young People) and are part of the UNISON negotiating team with the central negotiating body. Negotiating issues include:

- contractual issues for Classroom Assistants;
- temporary workforce numbers in the EA;
- school transport re-configuration;
- school meals service re-configuration;
- impact of school closures on existing staff;
- re-configuration of the youth services and decline of statutory provision;
- resisting the extension of the Civil Service Voluntary Exit Scheme to facilitate redundancies on the cheap in education;
- pay protection for all workers affected by the cuts.

Further & Higher Education & Libraries

■ Association of NI Colleges (ANIC)

Our members in ANIC are currently covered by a 2 year pay deal as follows:

- the application of the two year pay award for 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 which took effect in April 2016;
- allowances to the levels paid in other parts of the education sector;

- commitment to take account of developments of the joint reviews of term time working, with particular reference to the real living wage.

The ANIC negotiating body has not been functioning effectively and we are currently developing strategies to deal with this.

■ Higher Education

Our membership at both the University of Ulster and St Marys works in a combination of in-house and outsourced services.

Pay and the direct workforce: Earlier this year our higher education service group launched the campaign for a decent pay rise. The joint pay claim has been submitted. It is aimed at ensuring that everyone working in the sector, whatever their role, has a fair and decent pay uplift, improving their working lives. Key points from the claim are:

- An increase to all spine points on the national pay scale of RPI plus £1,200, or RPI plus 3%, whichever is greater;
- £10 per hour minimum wage with all HEIs to become living wage employers, ensuring all campus staff are paid at least the Living Wage Foundation rate.

The claim has a number of other elements, addressing the continuing use of zero hours contracts, excessive workloads and

eliminating the gender pay gap. The joint unions have expressed that they would consider a two-year pay offer that contains reference to both RPI – ‘keep up’ – and a ‘catch up’ element.



Privatised services: We are preparing a pay claim which will be lodged with the new owner of Noonans. This will be simultaneously lodged with Mount Charles.

■ The NI Library Authority

Despite assurances from the previous Minister, secured as a result of the 2016 campaign to halt reductions in opening hours, we have now been advised of proposals for a further 6% budget cut to the opening hours of the 14 largest Libraries, as well to training and books purchases.

We are now reactivating last year's campaign and our demands continue to be that:

- adequate funding is needed to maintain book stock, embrace technological advances, improve all existing premises and extend opening hours;

- staff, users and local communities should be fully involved in shaping services
- all libraries should ensure they are responsive and welcoming to local communities, as the best already do;
- staff training should be expanded and professional development encouraged, to support the delivery of a responsive and high quality service.

The proposals are now on hold. However, Libraries NI has stated its intent to make further savings of £2.143 m (7.28%).

■ Youth Justice Agency

Members in the Youth Justice Centres have been transferred from the EA to the Civil Service and have now come under the jurisdiction of its pay terms and conditions. There were many issues around pensions to be dealt with and we held briefing sessions for our membership on the new Civil Service pension scheme. We have managed to retain this membership but have had to transfer them to direct debit as we have no

direct bargaining rights or collective agreements within the civil service.

There is a new challenge emerging as the new Director has signalled an intention to dismantle the local JNC and meet with unions on an individual basis. We suspect that this may be to give recognition to a third union and we are contesting the proposal.

Health and social services bargaining

Bargaining with the Trusts at a regional level is governed by the Regional JNF. UNISON is the lead union at this table and our team comprises the Head of Bargaining and senior lay members.

There is a continuous battle to resist the tendency of Trust corporate managements to act as individual employers. UNISON has made strong interventions around failure to consult on a range of issues including:

- uniform change,
- ongoing failure to ensure correct pay levels for Trust employees,
- delays in filling posts, and
- increasing pressure on existing workforce to cope with staff shortages.



The most recent attempt to impose £70m cuts on Trust budgets has laid bare the failure of the 5 HSC Trusts to bring the proposals to the bargaining table in the first instance. Instead they moved to public consultation as a substitute for collective bargaining. UNISON has now put all 5 on notice that they are creating a major trade dispute with very serious consequences.

Despite the fact that we have now agreed a new protocol on overpayment policy that offers protection to the worker, at least one of our branches is moving to indicative ballot because of punitive action being taken by the Business Services Organisation against our members.



Rising to the challenge: Across health and social services we have strengthened our bargaining to secure UNISON's priorities. During the last number of months the main focus has been on challenging cuts, demanding adherence to equality legislation and Section 75 and demanding compliance with Agenda for Change terms and conditions.

Some key activity across branches includes initiatives from senior lay activists who have:

- Secured agreement and pay from Belfast Trust for hundreds of workers who had not been paid correctly for annual leave and sick leave under AfC. This challenge was mounted by Royal Hospitals branch.
- Secured the withdrawal of a proposal to close day centres which provide mental health and learning disability supports. This challenge was led by our social services branches.

Private Sector

We continue to increase our membership, particularly in private homecare and care homes. However, we still face the ongoing challenge of recognition and collective bargaining. Through our lay structures, we have recently agreed that public demonstrations and publicity will be harnessed more effectively if branch members and activists outside the private sector join together to exert both public and political pressure to secure justice for our members.

- Established a working group in the Western Trusts to review staffing levels, use of zero hour agency and temporary contracts amongst support service staff to eradicate these type of contracts and secure contracted hours for staff.
- Campaigned vigorously to defend the emergency department services at Daisy Hill Hospital and ensure funding is sustained for the hospital and all its services
- Continued negotiations are also taking place to secure adequate contracted hours for homecare workers, suitable shift patterns, adequate training for workers and increased Trust homecare provision.
- Lay negotiators were central to our challenge on uniform change across the service.
- In the NIAS the major review should result in increased jobs and resources.

While reorganisation has ostensibly been stalled we are concerned that decisions are being taken behind closed doors which will impact on jobs and services. The future of the HSCB and the PHA has yet to be determined.

The BSO is causing major problems for our members particularly through illegal deduction of overpayments and utterly unacceptable practices in selection and recruitment of Trust staff which is leading to rapid casualisation as Trust managers turn to agency work. We are now demanding action from Trusts and the BSO alike. We are also challenging some Trusts and the BSO for encouraging NHS staff in GP surgeries to switch to GP contracts in what is privatisation by stealth.

This campaign is being co-ordinated through the homecare steering group, the service group and the Regional Committee. We have prioritised recognition with the Sanville Group following the transfer of some homes from Four Seasons, including the County Home in Enniskillen where the UNISON partnership project has just concluded and we are anxious to ensure forward movement for our members.

■ GP surgeries

Following evidence that some Trusts were encouraging NHS staff in GP surgeries to switch to employment in the private sector we undertook a series of visits to advise our members of their rights and also to encourage GP staff to join the union.

We have now recruited additional members on the GP side and are developing our organisation of GP surgeries. In one Trust we had to challenge a decision to end BSO payroll support for these staff and transfer

directly to GP provided payroll. This issue is not currently resolved.



Community and Voluntary Sector

Our membership in the sector ranges from mental health and learning disability organisations to women's organisations, housing associations, large voluntary organisations and local community groups. Whilst our membership has significantly grown in the sector, cuts to government funding alongside severe reductions in grant aid from funders has resulted in redundancies, reduced staffing levels, pay freezes and service closures.

Our lay members in the sector work extremely hard to deliver representation but in most cases are constrained by the inability of most of the organisations to give sufficient paid release and facilities. The activist group is, however, highly visible in campaigns and political lobbies.

Current key issues for the membership include protective notice, redundancy payments, reorganisation due to loss of funding and seeking the equivalent of the JNC pay awards for 2016-2018.

We are successfully redeveloping our activist base, particularly in women's groups. Our members have been involved in a range of campaigns including:

- community based campaigns around housing rights;
- challenging the abortion laws;
- challenging cuts to public services and their impact on the C&V sector;
- challenging the welfare cuts;

The survey agreed at Regional Council is at an advanced stage and is being conducted in partnership with our members in PPR and reported in more detail in Section 3.





Objective 3

Campaigning, public policy & supporting the peace process

“Campaigning and promoting UNISON on behalf of members”

WHY CAMPAIGN?

As a union everything we do is about creating a better life for our members. Because of our direct involvement with our membership we are acutely aware of the issues which are important to them and the future. In the current climate, where a massive attack is being launched on public services, campaigning has never been more important.

Regional Committee is aware that much of our detailed work at the negotiating table and in political lobbying can seem remote from the everyday issues which affect our members' lives. We are determined to get the message across to ALL our members that the union is campaigning about issues such as:

- the overall economic situation and the impact of welfare reform;
- their rights as workers and their jobs and conditions in specific sectors;
- the health and education of their children;
- reforming our health and social care system to create a public health model for them and their families which aims to eradicate health inequalities;
- care for older people and their families;
- mental health care for them and their families – with a particular focus on suicide;
- job opportunities and career development for them and their families;
- better use of public money to create local jobs;
- better delivery of public services to tackle poverty, unemployment, ill health, and lack of skills and qualifications;
- building human rights and equality to tackle the discrimination they face;
- working together to build the local movement on peace;
- protecting our members, their families and communities from the negative effects of any exit from the European Union.
- targeting social need so that no one gets left behind.

All of our work in this section is about advancing the position of our members, their families and their communities.

Current political context



In early 2017 our political situation dramatically destabilised resulting in the collapse of our Government after only nine months and fresh Assembly elections in March 2017. We successfully engaged with the political parties in advance of the election, highlighting the key concerns of our members in our Assembly Election Manifesto, supported by UNISON GPF. We held regional hustings with activists from across NI, affording our members the opportunity to challenge the parties on key issues such as health, education, jobs, pay, human rights and equality, and the

impact of exiting the EU. Our key message to all parties is that the failure to properly share power within an equality and rights framework, must end. We have urged the parties to come together to form a proper power-sharing Government, within the framework of equality and human rights, which will improve the lives of our members, their families and their communities and which will work to address the many challenges we face.

Our hopes that this would be the outcome were further frustrated when Theresa May called a snap general election within weeks of our Assembly elections. We pay tribute to our members and activists for their staying power – 4 elections in 2 years and still no government!

The political instability we now experience comes at a time of significant challenges to the Peace Process itself. The UK Government has signalled a 'hard' exit from the EU. Protecting our precarious Peace Process was a major feature of the successful trade union campaign in which we played a major role and which resulted in a majority NI vote to 'remain.'

The current attitude of the UK Government is a threat to the principles of consent and equivalence of rights across the island of Ireland. These are core principles of the Peace Process. It will undoubtedly be followed by a sustained attack on the Human Rights Act, which would represent another disastrous blow to the equality and human rights provisions and unfinished business of the Good Friday Agreement.

Significant health inequalities continue to exist between the poorest and the wealthiest in NI. We continue to seek a new model of public health which would radically reform not only our health and social care system, but which also would radically change the way that all Government Departments and Ministers take the share of responsibility for the health and well-being of all the people. We had built a productive working relationship with the last Health Minister, who had responded positively to UNISON campaigns to retain weekly and fortnightly pay for lowest paid members and who had reinstated the Partnership Forum between health and social care bodies and the trade union movement.

A new transformation process in health and social care has been initiated in the last 12 months and we await the appointment of a new Health Minister who will be charged with taking this forward. We will pursue our key priorities for reform, including the abolition of the commissioner/provider split and an end to outsourcing of public jobs to the private sector,

whilst seeking to ensure that all reform is done in partnership and protects the workforce.

In education, our schools budgets have continued to face cuts with UNISON members amongst the hardest hit. The new Education Authority continues to make proposals which do not have the best interests of children at their core and which threaten our members jobs and terms and conditions. A new NI Government must deal with these issues urgently.



We continue to press for a strong focus on promoting and protecting our members' rights. Our priorities with government and employers continue to be for:

- a real Living Wage for all and pay parity for NHS workers in NI;
- building on powers in our new employment legislation to abolish zero-hours contracts;
- mainstreaming equality and human rights into public sector procurement and employment processes;
- gaining access for our members to adequate, affordable childcare, and
- providing our members with support to access existing entitlement to the benefit system and cope with the forthcoming changes.

Fundamentally, our politicians and the UK Government must implement commitments to equality and human rights, particularly through finally delivering a Bill of Rights for NI.

■ The impact of exiting the EU

This is one of the biggest issues we have faced in recent times. Its impact will be felt throughout our membership and across the island. The work needed to secure protection for the Peace Agreement and

our members' rights and livelihoods is so extensive that we share the workload with our allies in the equality and human rights fields and report activity in detail in this annual report.

It is clear that the UK Government has largely ignored the negative consequences that an EU exit will have on the Peace Process in NI. An EU exit will weaken the Good Friday Agreement; weaken equality and human rights protections; and could lead to a hard border being re-imposed on the island of Ireland. The pursuit of a 'hard' EU exit in particular could have devastating implications for trade and the economy in NI when we have already suffered generations of economic disadvantage.

In our campaigning for both the Assembly Election in March and the June General Election, we urged our local politicians to address key priorities and secure the best options for NI, including:

- continued membership of the single market and customs union;
- securing the status of the Good Friday Agreement;
- protecting workers' rights, which are devolved to NI;
- securing equality and human rights protections, such as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights;
- securing the free movement of goods, people and services across the island of Ireland;
- securing a right to remain for EU citizens;
- protecting our public services from any economic downturn;
- guaranteeing the funding for infrastructure, community projects and farmers which is currently drawn from the EU in future.

Protecting the Good Friday Agreement and the Peace Process: Protection of the Good Friday Agreement has been central to all our policy and campaigning work in relation to EU exit. In our motions to both UNISON NDC and ICTU BDC this year, we successfully called for both UNISON NEC and ICTU to ensure that protection of the Peace Process was a priority in the ongoing negotiations. We have emphasised these points in our own engagement with the EU Commission in NI

We have contributed to two ICTU position papers and have lobbied political parties to seek the implementation of policies that will protect trade and the economy, rights and equality, the Peace Process, an open border, and migrant workers. The Regional Secretary has taken part in the All-Island Civic Dialogue on EU exit led by the Irish Government, where our concerns in relation to the impact of EU exit on equality and human rights and the Peace Process have been made fully clear to the Irish Government.

We have also worked with colleagues in UNISON HQ to ensure that these issues are raised directly with the UK Government, the Labour Party and EU institutions.



A 'hard' exit – the impact on trade and the border: The UK Government has clearly set out the intention to have a 'hard' exit from the EU, with the UK leaving both the EU Single Market and Customs Union, after a transition period of two years which the EU has yet to agree to. It is vital that NI remains a member of both the EU Single Market and Customs Union to protect trade and jobs here and UNISON is pursuing this objective as part of our campaign.

If NI is not part of the Customs Union, this will create a customs border on the island of Ireland, negatively impacting trade, threatening jobs and interfering in the lives of UNISON members who regularly move back and forth across the border for work, study or family reasons. It is estimated that currently, 23,000 people commute across the border daily for work or study alone. Current arrangements must be preserved, with no

adverse impact being felt North or South. We will continue to exert pressure on both Governments and the EU to ensure that this is the case.

Protecting workers' rights and equality: Many of our current worker protections (such as maternity rights, parental leave, anti-discrimination laws, TUPE and protection for agency workers) are grounded in EU law that has then been implemented through domestic law in NI. The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill is designed to convert the body of existing EU law into UK law and has the potential to undermine workers rights, equality protections and the devolved powers of the NI Assembly. We successfully put forward a motion at NDC calling on the NEC to campaign to protect devolution in these circumstances.

In addition, the Bill currently contains no recognition of, or protection for, the Good Friday Agreement. UNISON is supporting amendments proposed by CAJ designed to give the agreement the force of law and allowing citizens to challenge the actions of public authorities if they act incompatibly with the agreement. We are working with colleagues across the UK and with CAJ, the Equality Coalition and the Human Rights Consortium, to oppose the Bill in its current form and are lobbying MPs to ensure it is amended. We have recently met with Owen Smith, the Shadow Secretary of State for NI to discuss our concerns in relation to the Bill and have proposed amendments which could protect workers' rights and equality here.

Protecting the rights of migrant workers:

UNISON is supporting the work of the newly formed NI Council for Racial Equality (NICRE). This body has been established following the closure of NICEM due to a lack of Government funding. It is focused on the impact of an EU exit on the rights of EU migrant workers and their families to remain in NI, as well as the impact on non-EU nationals through the possible introduction of a more restrictive immigration regime generally.

UNISON is also supporting the campaign being led by NICRE for non-British and non-Irish EU citizens living in NI to become eligible for Irish Citizenship, using the rights to citizenship set out under the Good Friday Agreement.



The EU referendum result has caused uncertainty and fear for migrants living in NI some of whom have acquired, or are in the process of acquiring a permanent right to reside in the UK. Through our Black and Migrant Workers Group we took an active part in the 'One Day Without Us' day of action in February as a strong response to the rising levels of racism and xenophobia that have been seen since the referendum result, and which have been pandered to by some politicians in their anti-migrant rhetoric.

■ Economic strategy

UNISON has long recognised the inter-dependence between a vibrant economy and strong socio-economic rights. Unequal societies are bad for everyone and NI is now the most unequal society in the UK, which itself is relatively unequal in comparison to other European countries.

Inequality impacts on economic growth, health and educational outcomes. Tackling inequality

and discrimination, and promoting equality of opportunity and socio-economic rights for the most deprived in our society is the key to building peace and growing the economy. For our members, inflation is rising, putting pressure on their household budgets. More and more workers live in poverty and continue to be denied the pay rises they need, meaning that in real terms their pay is worth less and less.

Economic impact of EU exit: We are staring into economic uncertainty due to the decision to exit the EU and the lack of clarity around what NI's future relationship with it will be. We know that due to EU exit sterling is being devalued and that concerns exist about a slowdown in consumer spending, but in the view of our own trade union unit - the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI) - as long as EU exit remains a vague political intention, its impact on the economy will be hard to judge and even harder to measure.

However, it is clear that exiting the EU presents significant risks to the economy in NI. NI is more dependent on the EU market for its exports than the UK as a whole. 56% of goods and services exports from NI go to the EU, with two-thirds going to the Republic of Ireland.

Outside of both the Single Market and the Customs Union, we would be subject to tariffs and quotas on our exports. It is vital that NI remains a member of both the EU Single Market and Customs Union to protect trade and jobs here. If NI is not part of the Customs Union, this will create a customs border on the island of Ireland, negatively impacting trade, threatening jobs and interfering in the lives of UNISON members who regularly move back and forth across the border for work, study or family reasons.

Precarious employment: An increasingly concerning aspect of the economy in NI has been the move away from full-time, permanent and regular employment to precarious employment. NERI has found that currently, permanent full-time contracts comprise the lowest share of the NI labour market than what has been the case in any other period throughout 2008-2016. By the last quarter of 2016 close to two in five of workers were employed in non-standard working arrangements.

These findings suggest both that permanent jobs have been replaced with temporary arrangements and that new jobs being offered are more likely to be in precarious employment situations. Particular rises in temporary and self-employment are clear.

Challenging this trend was a major focus of our 2016 Regional Council and forms a key part of the bargaining strategy endorsed by our service groups.

Impact on public sector jobs: A higher proportion of workers in NI are temporary or self-employed compared to GB, including amongst public sector workers. Over one in three workers are employed in a more insecure form of employment. NERI found that 11% of workers employed in the public sector in NI are working on a temporary contract compared to 7% in Great Britain.



This rise in public sector precarious employment is a major concern in terms of pay, terms and conditions, access to training and career pathways, and employment rights. UNISON negotiators are challenging this trend.

Programme for Government: There continues to be no effective economic strategy in place. The draft Programme for Government (PfG) prepared by the Executive before its collapse in January 2017 indicated that it would be supported by a new Economic Strategy but this did not materialise. An outcome of the draft PfG was to develop a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy. However the focus of this outcome was entirely on business, with a lack of reference to the contribution that the public sector makes to the economy.

UNISON argued that boosting public sector pay, such as by introducing the real Living Wage, and addressing longstanding inequalities in pay for health and social care workers compared to other countries in the NHS, would boost the economy.

We called for investment, jobs and resources to be allocated on the basis of objective need.

Challenging privatisation: The draft PfG also contained a proposed outcome that more people would be working in 'better' jobs. UNISON strongly opposed the view here that the private sector grows through the privatisation of public services and the loss of public sector jobs through the Voluntary Exit Scheme. These are devastating blows to the economy and will widen and deepen inequality in society.

According to the OECD Public Governance Review of NI, the public sector accounts for 30% of economic activity and 30% of all employment and is a significant source of income for business, both through the procuring of goods and services and through the money injected into the economy by wages. We continue to call on Government to support UNISON projects which have delivered real jobs for people living in areas of high deprivation.

Whilst the PfG was never formally approved by the Executive due to the political situation, it is clear that officials continue to use the draft PfG as a model for developing policies and strategies. We assume that if an Executive is reformed, or if Direct Rule is introduced, officials will attempt to bring forward the draft document once again as a new PfG. UNISON will be challenging officials to ensure that our views on economic outcomes significantly shape policies which are brought forward.

Corporation Tax: The draft PfG continued to commit the Executive to cutting Corporation Tax to 12.5% by April 2018, with no assessment of the risks introducing such a rate would have in terms of resource allocation for public services. The introduction of a lowered corporation tax will come at a cost of a reduction of resources for public services. In addition, UNISON highlighted that the effectiveness of a proposed Corporation Tax rate of 12.5% as a driver of economic growth must be seriously questioned in circumstances where the UK Government has announced its intention to lower the rate of corporation tax

to 17% by 2020. Recent public statements by Invest NI and politicians from Sinn Féin and the DUP have suggested that any change will not occur until 2020 – 2021 at the earliest due to the current political crises and the economic uncertainty created by an exit from the EU.

The Confidence and Supply Deal: The DUP-Tory deal to secure support for Theresa May's Government states that one of the first tasks for a new Executive in NI will be to work towards the devolution of Corporation Tax rates, the timetable for its introduction, and how this might best be flexibly managed, with options being developed for Autumn Budget 2017. This suggests that the devolution of corporation tax will remain a threat to public sector spending if a new Executive is formed.



Whilst the DUP-Tory deal commits money towards economic and infrastructure development in NI amounting to £475 million, this money comes with no condition that it be spent on the basis of objective need. This includes £400 million specifically earmarked for the York Street Interchange and other unspecified infrastructure projects, with no specific earmarking of funding for serious infrastructure deficits to the West of the Bann and no evidence that the public sector equality duties were applied to these decisions.

Budget and Public Finances: The NI Executive collapsed in January 2017 without having passed a fresh budget for the 2017/18 financial year. This led to the Permanent Secretary in the Department of Finance assuming responsibility under section 59 of the NI Act 1998 for allocating money to other Departments to allow public services to continue to operate.

Legally, the Permanent Secretary could allocate an amount up to 95% of the previous year's Budget in the absence of a Budget having been passed.

If an Executive is not formed in the Autumn, it is likely that the Secretary of State will pass a budget for NI from Westminster. The Secretary of State has already produced two draft budgets indicating what individual Departments would receive in order to allow them to make spending decisions.

The first draft of this budget in April indicated a 2.5% cut to the education budget, before the pressures of inflation were even factored in. Whilst spending on health was to be increased, this also amounts to a cut due to inflation in the cost of health and social care running at 6% per year.

In July, when the Secretary of State published his second draft budget, some small amounts of money were reallocated to health (£60 million) and education (£30 million). However significant shortfalls still exist for these services and have led to a series of proposals for cuts which will only serve to damage the health of the public, compromise the education of our children, and negatively affect our members. None of the Secretary of State's indicative budgets have included the money promised as part of the DUP-Tory deal.

Day-to-Day spending on public services will have fallen by 8.5% in the 10 years up to 2019/20. In cash terms, this means there will be £855 million less in spending than there was in 2009/10. When adjusted for inflation, spending on Education in 2016/17 had fallen by just under 9% from 2009/10. Much of this impact is borne by UNISON members.

As the Block Grant which funds public services in NI is fixed by the UK Government at Westminster, UNISON made the issue of public finances central to our campaigning for the General Election in June 2017. We produced leaflets for our members to use when candidates canvassed them for their vote with questions members could ask on what the candidates would do to oppose further

austerity cuts to public spending and secure the resources that public services in NI need.

We challenged candidates from across the political parties on this issue at our Regional Hustings on 5th June.



The end of austerity? Given the major cuts in public spending which have taken place in NI over the last decade, no one should be under any illusion that the financial package included within the DUP-Tory deal represents the end of austerity. Firstly, £475 million of this package is allocated specifically for infrastructure projects, rather than the day-to-day running of public services. Of the £350 million allocated to health and education, £200 million is specifically earmarked for health services transformation, with £50 million allocated for mental health.

Whilst £50 million a year has been set aside for two years to address immediate pressures in health and education, all of the money obtained in the DUP-Tory deal is theoretical. Whilst the DUP argue that the money will be made available, regardless of whether a devolved Executive is formed to spend it, others have suggested that this will not be the case.

Despite the DUP-Tory deal having been struck in June, none of the money for public services in NI has been released and instead appears to have been caught in the wider political negotiations around restoring devolution. Meanwhile, cuts to budgets in health and education continue to be put forward, and UNISON continues to fight against these as outlined further in other sections of this report.

■ Public Procurement Policy, Privatisation and PFI

Across the island of Ireland both Governments spend £billions every year buying goods and services and building public infrastructure. If Governments were to attach the right conditions to the contracts it would create an economic upturn, decent jobs, help tackle discrimination and disadvantage, regenerate our communities most in need, and strengthen our society.

An estimated £2.7 billion is spent on NI public procurement each year. As we reported last year, concern remains that the privatisation agenda is moving ahead, as seen in parts of the draft Programme for Government, and despite commitments from some of the key parties in Government.

We continue to press for:

- an end to the two-tier workforce which we have partially secured;
- disclosure of all relevant procurement documents;
- inclusion of Living Wage clauses;
- disclosure of all potential transferring liabilities pre-tender;
- options appraisal that includes the benefits of the continued delivery of services in-house;
- implementation of the recommendations of the NIHRC, including our priority for human rights violating companies such as G4S, Serco and Hewlett Packard to be excluded from public procurement.

Homecare procurement: Over the past year, we have been particularly focused on homecare procurement processes. UNISON engaged with the Belfast Trust in good faith at an early stage in an effort to ensure that its most recent homecare procurement process was compliant with human rights and equality obligations. It was intended that the Belfast Trust would be part of a pilot process on mainstreaming equality and human rights into the procurement process.

We engaged in what should have been a partnership approach to develop a model for use by all Trusts. We have been extremely disappointed by the approach which was eventually taken by the Belfast Trust and our disappointment has been turning to deep concern and anger due to the information we have been receiving in terms of those companies that have been awarded contracts for homecare under this procurement

process, including companies who have been at the fore in anti-trade union attitudes and the promotion of bogus 'self-employment'.

However, we are aware that the Alcatel process has been triggered in relation to this procurement and a full legal challenge may well take place, resulting in delay and additional costs to the Trust. We believe that this state of affairs could have been avoided if the Trust had properly engaged with us in developing the tender, as was our expectation. We have called on the Trust to rerun this process and ensure that UNISON are fully and properly involved so that a model is actually developed which mainstreams equality and human rights.



We have engaged substantially with the Expert Panel appointed by the previous Health Minister to examine adult care and support. We made our opposition to the privatisation and outsourcing of the social care system clear as it does not increase efficiency, raise the quality of care or improve the quality of services.

Our key concerns include:

- reversing the current trend of privatisation and outsourcing;
- reform of the procurement process for adult social care;
- inclusion of contract conditions that would improve pay and conditions, preferably the Living Wage but at least the minimum wage, and end the use of zero-hours contracts;
- requirements that workers receive allowances for mileage, are paid for travel time and don't have to pay for uniforms or phone usage;

- ensuring that workers have the opportunity to up-skill and access training and carer development opportunities;
- ensuring that care provided meets the requisite standards, such as the UNISON Ethical Care Charter and NICE Standards.

The right conditions being attached to procurement contracts would lead to a quality care service, which meets future demands and which has a specialist workforce at its core. Whilst we understand that the Department of Health has received the final report of the Expert Panel, its publication is being blocked due to the lack of a Health Minister being in post.

We are very mindful that public procurement laws are grounded in EU law and could be significantly affected by the withdrawal of the UK from the EU. The exit from the EU will open up an opportunity to alter the procurement process in a potentially negative way, as once again EU law will no longer need to be complied with.

Any moves which could be made to undermine the principle of transparency in public procurement, and which could set back the target of including conditions in contracts which give effect to socioeconomic rights and promote equality of opportunity, would be very damaging and will be strongly opposed.

Through our membership of the Equality Coalition, we have successfully lobbied public authorities on revising their statutory equality schemes to recognise procurement decisions as ‘policy’ matters to which the duty to promote equality of opportunity under section 75 applies.



■ Employment and trade union law

Our UNISON colleagues in GB have been hit with Tory anti-trade union laws and further attacks on employment rights. UNISON success in the Supreme Court at striking down fees for employment tribunals was celebrated by members in NI even though they are not affected. We also do not have to face the attack on deduction of union subs at source (DOCAS) but fully support our colleagues in GB in the extensive UNISON campaign to retain the service.

UNISON’s political funds are also under attack from the Tories. Whilst we have always endured the legal requirement to contract into the fund this has now been imposed on all new members in GB and we support the campaign to maximise sign-up as our members in NI benefit from the GPF.

Employment law in NI is devolved and falls under the responsibility of the Department for the Economy. We have been fortunate to protect our members from the worst of these attacks. We have made extensive submissions

through ICTU and UNISON is a member of the joint TU/ employers’ round table.

As outlined above, we are actively engaged in ensuring that an exit from the EU is not used to erode or weaken existing employment protections and does not lead to a Westminster Government effectively reassuming control of employment law matters here.

In last year’s Annual Report, we reported on the positive measures within the Employment Act (NI) 2016 in relation to preventing abuses arising from the use of zero hours contracts and a requirement on the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (now the Executive Office) to create regulations requiring employers to publish information on the gender pay gap and an action plan to eliminate gaps where they exist.

However, disappointingly due to the collapse of the Executive and the Assembly, no actions have been taken to implement these

provisions. In addition, a strategy and action plan on eliminating gender pay differences was required to be published under the Act, in consultation with trade unions, by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and no consultation on such a strategy has begun.

It is intended whenever the Assembly returns that responsibility for the gender pay regulations and gender pay strategy and action plan should transfer to the Department for Communities. We have already engaged with the Department as part of an ICTU delegation on these issues, in advance of any formal consultation on the regulations and strategy

with the goal of ensuring that the regulations are effective and cover as many employers as possible.

We have also emphasised the importance of any strategy and action plan on the gender pay gap being binding on the entire Executive, and effectively tackling systemic issues which can widen the gender pay gap, such as the lack of affordable and accessible childcare. We will continue to bring pressure to bear on Government in whatever form it takes given our current political stalemate to progress these issues.

■ The environment and the green economy

The Scottish Government has now led the way in banning fracking. UNISON is committed to securing the same result in NI but this is yet another campaign stalled due to the absence of a Government.

When it was in place the Executive was dragging its feet on issues such as the development of the green economy and new sustainable employment. It is a tragedy that the key issue to hit the headlines was the renewable heating initiative, the mishandling of which was instrumental in bringing down the Government.

In 2016 Regional Council strongly supported our branches in Fermanagh, Antrim and Belfast by highlighting our opposition to

fracking and drilling in these locations. We revisited these demands in our 2017 campaign in the Assembly elections. It is to be hoped that with the return of political devolution in the future much greater attention will be given to the whole issue of the environment and the green economy.



Low pay, poverty and targeting social need

■ The state of poverty and low pay in NI

NI Anti-poverty Network: UNISON Head of Organising, Thomas Mahaffy, remains on the Board of the NI Anti-Poverty Network. Following the withdrawal of Public Health Agency funding in 2013 and subsequent loss of staff, UNISON has facilitated the continued existence of the Network to ensure that it makes connections between poverty and the wide range of Government strategies and policies that directly impact on the lives of our members, their families and communities.

Poverty and economic inequality in NI continue to dominate and are directly related to the failure over the past decade of our Government to address this issue within an equality and rights framework and on the basis of objective need. It is a core issue for UNISON with our members, their families and communities becoming more impoverished as a result of damaging decisions by both the UK and NI Governments and irresponsible decisions by many employers.

■ Low pay, poverty and welfare cuts

Individuals on the lowest incomes are most dependent on state welfare support, leaving them more vulnerable to poverty over time as the full extent of welfare cuts begin to bite.

Recent research from the Department of Communities in NI continues to confirm high levels of poverty in NI.

- Three-quarters of individuals in NI have a weekly income below the mean UK income. 104,000 individuals have a household income between £270 and £300 per week, leaving them either just below or just over the poverty line.
- 11% of working-age adults in working families were still in relative poverty before their housing costs were taken into account.
- 45% of working-age adults in families where no-one was in work were in relative poverty.
- In total, 173,000 working-age adults were in relative poverty before housing costs were factored in with 62% in working families and 38% in families where no one was in work.
- The long term trend shows that children are at a higher risk of living in poverty than the overall NI population

The last 12 months has continued to see attacks on the most vulnerable in our society, including the poorest children, victims of sexual violence and the disabled. This has included attempts to cut school uniform grants; the introduction of a two-child cap for child tax credits, with exemptions only where a woman can show her third child was conceived as a result of rape; and the introduction of PIPs causing stress and hardship to disabled people trying to access the benefits that they need.

School uniform grants: UNISON successfully challenged the attempt to cut school uniform grants, leading to this cut being almost immediately reversed by the Department of Education.

Two child cap and rape clause: With our allies the Women's Policy Group and the Equality Coalition we have been involved in urging the Secretary of State, the Equality Commission, Human Rights Commission, and the Commissioner for Children and Young People

to take action against the two child cap and rape clause. We are currently considering the possibility of legal challenge against the introduction of the cap and will continue to fight hard against this discriminatory policy which will cause considerable harm to the most vulnerable.

We have reported in Section 2 on our main bargaining interventions on low pay and poverty. Our policy interventions are being taken in co-ordination with our allies in the Equality Coalition and the NI Anti-Poverty Network.



Anti-poverty strategy: Despite the clear court judgement that the Executive is in breach of its legal obligations to produce an anti-poverty strategy, no strategy based on objective need has yet emerged.

UNISON has continued to call for an anti-poverty strategy within our engagement on the development of the draft Programme for Government and has highlighted that this should be based on the principles agreed by Anti-Poverty Network, Child Poverty Alliance and CAJ at the conference hosted by UNISON in April 2016 which was reported on last year. A conference report has been produced and will be used as an important tool in advocating for the development of an effective strategy.

UNISON is aware that it is intended to bring forward an anti-poverty strategy as part of a new Social Strategy, being developed by the Department of Communities. We are aware that officials have developed a draft Social Strategy, but no consultation has taken place on this due to the current political crisis.

We are concerned at the potential for any anti-poverty strategy to be inadequate and unfit for purpose in circumstances where it is folded into a wider Social Strategy and we will continue to press the Department for delivery of a robust,

effective strategy based on objective need and informed by the principles agreed by the Anti-Poverty Network, Child Poverty Alliance and CAJ.

■ Welfare reform

The trade union campaign of resistance to welfare reform continues. The welfare state is still being used as a scapegoat for the current economic crisis, with the spin around welfare cuts being deliberately distorted to foment intolerance of people covered by the welfare system. It has been a deceitful campaign which has failed to highlight who will be disadvantaged. As we have previously highlighted, the unemployed and the disabled are the minority in the welfare system. Pensioners and low paid workers are the majority.

Universal Credit was introduced in NI in September 2017 despite widespread opposition and calls for any roll-out to be halted, due to serious flaws having been identified in the system in GB. It will be phased in over the next two years for new and existing claimants. More than 300,000 families will be affected by its introduction with more than 100,000 worse off.

Whilst the Executive had agreed that mitigations will be available for families claiming Universal Credit, concerns exist about how the roll-out of Universal Credit will be scrutinised and who will be held accountable for any problems in the absence of an Executive and Assembly.

To effectively tackle poverty it is essential that Government puts poverty reduction at the core of their economic and social policies and ensure that any anti-poverty strategies are

underpinned by an equality and human rights based approach. Poverty in NI will never be effectively tackled in an environment of continued cuts to welfare benefits and the fact that the short-term mitigation measures introduced under the Welfare Supplementary Payments Regulations (NI) 2016 will only last until 2020. The impact of these austerity measures will disproportionately affect those already living in areas of disadvantage and will only serve to deepen inequality.

Similarly, given the vulnerability of the lowest paid to poverty, we will continue to campaign for a real Living Wage based on the recommendations of the Living Wage Foundation, to be the minimum standard of pay for all workers.

We have called for the introduction of the real Living Wage across all of the public sector and that it should be a condition of all procurement exercises between public bodies and the private, community and voluntary and social enterprise sectors in responding both to the Executive draft Programme for Government and within the review of adult social care commissioned by the Department of Health.

We have also called for our politicians to commit to this in our campaigning for both the Assembly election (March 2017) and General Election (June 2017). All campaigning on these issues will continue to be informed by our bargaining activities in combating low pay and economic inequality.

■ Community & voluntary sector

As the assault on funding for the community and voluntary sector continues key organisations close down. Since our last Regional Council we have faced the closure of the NI Council for Ethnic Minorities (our

partner and founder member of the Equality Coalition). We also saw the demise of Gingerbread which for decades has supported single parent families.

These are the latest examples of campaigning organisations that have been victims of austerity cuts, but in the case of NICEM we are very concerned that they have paid dearly for their challenge function on behalf of black and migrant workers and communities.

Linked to our anti-poverty, equality and human rights strategy we have continued our political lobby and direct negotiations with Government and the public service to challenge:

- the continued erosion of core costs funding;
- the increased use of contracts as opposed to the giving of grants;
- defective contracts awarded on the basis of the lowest price, even if not economically viable;
- contracts which fail to specify correct application of TUPE rights of workers and

allow bidders to evade legal obligations and transfer liabilities;

- the increased trend for the sector to be misused to substitute for existing directly delivered public services;
- the increasing damage being inflicted through private sector hedge and vulture funds, raiding the budgets of independent providers of services;
- the failure of governance models such as CLEAR to make any allowance or recommendations for good employment processes including failure to pay the living wage.



UNISON campaigning for health and social services

Bengoa report and Delivering Together:

Following yet another review of our health system, this time by Dr Bengoa, the Minister for Health launched the 10 year strategy 'Delivering Together' in late October 2016. UNISON gave a cautious welcome to the strategy which was also accompanied by commitments on increased staffing, the Living Wage, and an emphasis on in-house delivery of homecare services. For the first time a health Minister acknowledged that NHS staff and unions would play a key role in the co-design of new services and that additional funding would be required for implementation.

This, coupled with the restoration of the Health Service Partnership Forum, created some optimism that we were finally going to deliver health service reform and reorganisation in a manner which genuinely involved and served the public and the workforce alike.

With the collapse of the Executive and Assembly the future of the strategy is unclear. A myriad of workstreams have been established but we are concerned that decisions are being taken behind closed doors which are not in keeping with the spirit of the Delivering Together strategy. Uncovering how decisions are currently being taken is a major focus of our work.

Cuts to the health budget 2017/18: In August 2017 the Department of Health told the 5 HSC Trusts to make £70million in cuts. All 5 responded by producing 'savings plans' that contained outrageous cuts proposals and that were not subject to an assessment of their impact as required under equality law.

UNISON intervened at the special Trust Board meetings organised to launch the proposals and undertook a major 6 week campaign of opposition. Regional Committee pays tribute to our members across NI, particularly our health and social care staff, who engaged in an intensive campaign to challenge cuts and

who encouraged tens of thousands of members of the public to sign petitions and submit responses to the 'sham' consultation.

The process was also remarkable for demonstrating that all political parties can be on the same side when it suits. Our key message to the health system was that:

- The £70m cuts should never have been proposed. The money was always there. It exists in the Block grant and in the additional £1bn brokered by the DUP;
- We will not accept any more 'sticking plaster' solutions or any further crisis management. Either the leadership of the health system is on the side of the People and the health care workforce or it is merely looking out for itself;
- We urgently need investment in the transformation of our health and social care system based on the founding principles of the NHS and increased investment;
- We need investment in the pay and conditions of health service workers and we need the staffing gaps filled by permanent staff with permanent jobs;.
- We reject the privatisation of our health system by stealth.

On the 13th October UNISON branches across NI joined together to support the UNISON team delivering a strong message to each of the 5 relevant Trusts. Our submission is available on the UNISON website. It sets down a number of important messages, including the fact that failure to bring the recommendations to the bargaining table may lead us into a trade dispute and the fact we have already commenced the process of pursuing the Trusts and the rest of the health system for their failure to comply with their legal obligations.

It is clear from the letter issued to Trusts by the Permanent Secretary on the 11 October 2017 that much larger budget cuts are envisaged and that without intervention the health crisis will deepen. Whether this is a strategy to exert pressure on political parties to agree a deal to return to Stormont or simply the continuation of a failed

programme of austerity, or both, remains to be seen. For UNISON's part we have made it clear that there is more money in the system and it should properly be allocated to both health and education, that the £1billion from the DUPs confidence and supply agreement with Theresa May's Government must be released immediately, and that arguments from the UK Government about 'the money tree' have been proven false.

This punitive action against both our health and education budgets comes at a time when the Westminster Government has been forced to find additional funding for the health service in England and has taken a decision not to implement proposed cuts in education. UNISON will continue to exert public and political pressure, mount legal challenges when necessary, and take industrial action if needed to support our members and the services they provide.



Review of adult social care: In early 2017 we engaged extensively with a review panel established by the Department of Health following the Bengoa report to make recommendations in relation to the future provision of adult social care. Our key demands included that:

- Trends in the privatisation and outsourcing of social care must be reversed, with services moving back 'in-house';
- The social care system in NI must be provided in a framework which promotes equality and protects human rights, for both the public and the workforce.
- Funding is urgently provided to meet growing levels of need and ensure quality of care;

- The poor terms and conditions experienced by workers must be addressed, including the introduction of the real Living Wage, the abolition of zero-hour contracts and the recognition of trade unions by employers;
- Best practice outcomes within social care must a requirement placed on providers, including compliance with the UNISON Ethical Care Charter and the NICE Guidance specifying a minimum 30 minute domiciliary care visit;
- Best practice within public procurement processes must be introduced in order to mainstream these conditions into contracts for the provision of services, moving way from a “race to the bottom” approach where providers may win contracts by bidding at the lowest price, leading to cheaper care, poorer quality conditions for care users and which places providers and the workforce under pressure to deliver a service under low pay and in constrained time slots;
- The use of self-directed support raises issues around the training, expertise and regulation of those who may provide support. Where these approaches are undertaken, they must not be used as a means to outsource or privatise care.
- Admission lists to publically owned nursing homes must be re-opened;
- The future of statutory provision for adults with learning disabilities and mental health needs must be secured, including day centres and short breaks provision. Reablement must be properly funded and carried out by public health care workers;
- Partnership working, using the approaches developed by UNISON over the last 15 years, must move from the fringes of the social care system to become mainstreamed good practice.



The report of the Review Panel has been completed and submitted to the Department of Health. However, in the absence of a Health Minister, the Department will not publish this.

Regardless of the report’s recommendations, we will continue to press the Department and any incoming Minister to deal with the serious issues affecting the sector as a priority, particularly the exploitation of workers.

Campaigns in our Education Services

Budget cuts: Last year our concern was at the impact of cuts to the 2016/17 education budget. A further massive cut of £105million has recently been announced for the 2017/18 allocation.

We have already seen an attack on the extended schools programme which makes vital provision for disadvantaged children. This is an ongoing campaign. The decision to remove the uniform grant was met with strong resistance from UNISON and many other groups in society and was recently reversed.

However, this new set of cuts is likely to now deeply affect our members, particularly cleaners, transport drivers, technicians, catering staff in the school meals service and classroom assistants.

There has already been a declaration by school principles that they will not implement further cuts. However, by protecting the curriculum and the classroom many may decide that support services are where the cuts will fall. As reported in Section 2 in bargaining we are challenging the EA.

While we are again hampered by the collapse of Government here, we did challenge the previous new Education Minister during his short term of office as we were particularly concerned that decisions on the future of education were not being taken within an equality and rights framework.

The unacceptable cuts that have been made to our education services were a key message that we delivered as part of our 2017 NI Assembly Election Manifesto. We asked what steps parties and candidates would take:

- to support an education system that delivers to disadvantaged areas, is non-selective, and promotes equality;
- to challenge disadvantage and support improvement by taking forward a new approach to the funding formula that not only restores recent cuts, but targets objective need and inequality;
- to protect and strengthen the work of classroom, nursery and special needs staff;
- to protect cleaning, catering and schools based staff against the threat of privatisation;
- to ensure that all staff in schools are employed on fair contracts;
- to stop plans to curtail Special Educational Needs services for pre-school children;
- to ensure that future area planning processes consider workforce issues and maintain job levels.

Common Funding Formula: We continue to press for greater transparency in the Education Funding Formula. Unravelling education funding, and in particular school's funding is always a challenge in NI. The Common Funding Scheme for the local management of schools is the means by which the education budget is distributed.

The total amount to be spent on schools is called the General Schools Budget (excluding special schools). It is made up of three specific categories of spending.

- The Aggregated Schools Budget is the total amount delegated to individual schools under the LMS common formula;

- Resources Held at Centre are amounts allocated to school budgets other than by means of the common formula (for example, for the payment of substitute teachers in certain circumstances);
- Centrally Held Resources Attributable to Schools are amounts held by ELBs for services provided to schools in their area - for example home to school transport and school meals.

The percentage of the education budget allocated to the aggregated schools budget is just over 60%. An additional 12% of the overall budget is allocated to schools from centre budgets held by the Education Authority. 13% is allocated for attributable services such as school meals.



UNISON made detailed recommendations to the last review of the common funding formula, some of which were taken on board by the previous education minister. As previously reported, the initial Assembly debate on the new formula was the subject of attempts by certain politicians to sectarianise the agenda and we vigorously challenged these moves to attack objective need. It is clear that the funding formula will now not address the growing poverty of our children and this will be taken forward in the UNISON 2018 programme.

Area Planning: In April 2017, the EA published its first Regional Strategic Area Plan for school provision across NI for the period 2017 – 2020. It was accompanied by an Annual Action Plan (2017-18) which identifies those schools that will be subject to 'developments' over a 12 month period, which could be proposed closures or mergers.

This Annual Action Plan was not subject to public consultation, unlike the Strategic Area Plan, nor was their discussion or engagement with UNISON and other recognised trade unions through the EA Joint Negotiating Council before it was developed.

We are clear that where UNISON has substantial membership in a school that is threatened with closure, and there is demonstrable local community support for the school to remain open, UNISON will give full support to anti-closure campaigns.

In campaigning for more resources for education services, we are mindful that a key consideration in area planning is a school's financial position. We do not believe that schools should be judged as unsustainable and face closure or merger in future because they have been the victims of austerity.

UNISON will continue to monitor all development proposals put forward which affect our members and will ensure their interests are safeguarded within the area planning process.

Threats to outdoor education centres: In November 2016, the EA announced that it intended to close four of the eight existing statutory residential outdoor education centres, located at Bushmills, Ardnabannon, Killowen and Delamont. In addition, for a fifth centre, Killyleagh, a move to self-catering was proposed, suggesting a threat to those employed there.

UNISON has opposed these unjustified closure proposals and the unacceptable process undertaken by the EA in terms of consultation and engagement with unions and staff.

Our members lobbied political parties, undertook protests and gave evidence directly to the NI Assembly Education Committee outlining the negative impact that the closures would have had on our members and the children and young people who benefit considerably from using the centres.

Due to the pressure brought to bear by UNISON and our allies, in October 2017 the EA announced that the centres at Bushmills, Killowen and Killyleagh will be retained, but will be adapted and developed to extend provision for vulnerable young people for whom specialist education services and provision are required, for example, Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS).

The EA further announced that the Delamont Centre will also be retained. However, it stated that it still intended to close the Ardnabannon Centre. The decision to close Ardnabannon was made despite the vast majority of consultees opposing such a move (over 88% of respondents). UNISON remains completely opposed to the closure of the Ardnabannon Centre. In addition, we are assessing the implications for our members in the centres that are earmarked for development.

Time for Change - UNISON Partnerships that make a difference

Over the past 17 years UNISON has initiated a series of unique collaborative partnerships with health employers throughout NI on a wide range of projects that have produced real outcomes on improved care and satisfaction for patients, clients, health and social care workers alike. They are based on true inclusion; real equality of decision-making, resources and support; as well as trust and respect for UNISON members. The model has its origins in the pioneering

UNISON / Royal Hospitals Support Services Partnership and has also been influenced by the work of the International Action Research Project between unions and employers in NI and New York. UNISON currently has partnership projects with Health and Social Care Trusts throughout NI.

This work was showcased at a major event in 2015 and the subsequent conference report was launched in November 2016 at a

breakfast seminar jointly sponsored by UNISON and the HSC Leadership Centre.

Speakers (including the Regional Secretary, the Chief Executive of the Belfast Trust and Susan Wasstrom, interim Director of the US-based Labour Management Project) reflected on international best practice and the transformative potential of union management partnerships to:

- enhance the delivery of health and social care services;
- improve outcomes for patients, clients and other service users; and
- improve the working lives of staff through change interventions to improve their job satisfaction, health and well-being.

UNISON activists and management from all HSC Trusts also reflected on how we can work differently and think differently in order to create real change both inside and outside the system.

At the seminar Pamela Dooley launched a bespoke training programme for managers

and union activists on the principles and processes that are core to this way of working.



This section summarises the development and key outcomes from a selection of these partnership over the past year. Core to our participation in them is our fundamental concern that joint work must be to the benefit of care standards and our members; must help to secure their jobs; and must create increased opportunities for frontline workers to have a voice in how quality care is delivered.

■ UNISON / Employer partnership training

As detailed above, UNISON's bespoke training programme for union activists and managers was launched at special breakfast seminar in November 2016.

Delivered by Union/Employer Partnership Advisor Pamela Dooley, the Programme concentrates on the principles and processes of partnership working including:

- team effectiveness;
- individual and joint interests;

- project assurance and measurement processes;
- sustaining partnership.

To date, the training has been piloted to UNISON activists and managers and during 2017 has successfully kick-started partnership initiatives with the Northern Trust and the NI Ambulance Service.

■ Western Area Care Homes Project

The evaluation of this UNISON initiated care home partnership with Western HSC Trust (Seymore Gardens, Derry), Age NI (Meadowbank, Omagh) and Four Seasons (County Care Home, Enniskillen) was delayed due to the transfer of ownership of County Care Home from Four Seasons to the Sanville Nursing Home Group.

However, initial analysis shows that the staff and resident-focused interventions initiated within each home:

- have improved the working lives of our members through actions that have a positive impact on their job satisfaction;
- have empowered residents to "thrive" in the context of person-centred care and the protection of their human rights; and

- have increased the strength of UNISON through improved organisation and membership growth.

The final partnership report will be completed before the end of the year and will detail the key interventions that have taken place over the previous three years including:

- improvements to the physical environment such as the redevelopment of the outdoor garden at Seymore;
- the use of memory boxes;
- new activity programmes;
- improved staff training with support from UNISON’s Education Programme;
- improved communications through the use of Newsletters and other communications;

- increased use of staff meetings to ensure that staff have more input into decisions that are being made;
- new and improved laundry facilities.



The final report will also include a series of recommendations focusing on how care can be improved across the wider system.

■ The UNISON Led Southern HSC Trust Laundry Project

Following interim evaluation at the end of 2016, further interventions were agreed by the Partnership Steering Group to improve relationships and the working lives of staff in the Laundry at Craigavon Hospital.

Final evaluation commenced in September 2017 and will include surveys of all staff, and analysis of the impact of interventions that have taken place since 2015. These interventions have included:

- training and team building sessions focused on resolving key work issues;
- information sessions for staff on the impact of welfare reform measures such as changes to Working Families Tax Credit;
- the development of a staff Charter where staff agreed the set of behaviours that would ensure more effective working relationships;
- improvement to management practice including more positive use of team meetings;
- the production of communications materials for other staff groups such as the leaflet “Don’t be a Bed Bundler” and information on the importance of the proper use of cable ties;
- negotiation of new permanent posts to replace temporary and agency;

- concerted action to address issues of bullying;
- action to improve health and well-being through promotion of the Big Bus Cancer Unit;
- a renewed focus on on-job training and the potential for acting-up.



Analysis already indicates a drop in annual sickness absence rates from 15% to 5% as a result of the project. It is expected that other key outcomes will demonstrate that that prioritising the development of a healthy, satisfied and well-trained workforce is core to the future efficiency and effectiveness of the in-house laundry service.

This project has highlighted the importance and taken on the challenge of creating better workplace relationships - not only between

union and management and staff and management, but also between peer groups of workers.

■ UNISON / Belfast HSC Trust Mental Health Project

Between January and March 2017 UNISON and the Belfast HSC Trust initiated a 3 month pilot partnership project to support patients with mental issues presenting to the Mater Hospital A&E. The partnership was developed in the context of:

- the highest rates of suicide and mental health problems throughout the UK;
- A&Es not conducive to dealing with someone with psychosis, suicidal or self-harm feelings;
- many vulnerable people leaving A&Es prior to treatment, with knock on effects, not only for the health and well-being of the individual and increased readmission rates, but also for other HSC services and the police who have a role in locating those who leave.

The key objective of the partnership was to reduce the number of patients with mental health problems leaving the Mater Hospital ED before receiving the care they require by introducing a 'befriending' service for vulnerable patients provided by the local voluntary organisation PIPs (Public Initiative for Prevention of Suicide and Self Harm).

Additional objectives included:

- reducing the resources currently spent monitoring those patients;
- reducing the subsequent pressure on NHS and other public services that results when those patients do not receive the care they require in the proper setting;
- reducing related staff training needs and other interventions to improve service delivery and patient/staff satisfaction;
- positively impacting on the wider public policy goals of reducing suicide and self-harm rates and increasing public confidence in the NHS.



The results show that:

- allocation of a befriender is correlated with a significant decrease in patient distress levels following contact with befrienders;
- the vast majority of patients participating in the study were very satisfied with the care they received and the service provided by the befrienders.

This decrease in stress has resulted in:

- fewer patients leaving the A&E without receiving the proper care;
- reduced stress on nursing and other staff due to no longer having to monitor patients with mental health concerns;
- more staff time being freed up and allocated to other patients within the ED;
- increased satisfaction and experience of patients with mental health concerns.

There is additional evidence that the intervention resulted in:

- increased utilisation of follow up mental health services;
- reduced pressure on primary care services and police time due to a reduction in referrals.

Whilst staff satisfaction within the ED is generally high across a series of quality of care and service delivery factors, of concern is the lower likelihood that nursing staff will be satisfied and the potential impact this may be having on their health, wellbeing; wider service delivery and organisational effectiveness.

A final partnership report is being prepared but is clear that:

- the befriending model utilised within this pilot project should be replicated in other areas of the Trust, and throughout the HSC system as a whole;
- the role of 'befriender' should be considered a core, permanent role within

the wider health and social care team under Agenda for Change terms and conditions;

- training on mental health and suicide awareness should be made available for all staff who work in the ED and associated services.

■ UNISON / Northern HSC Trust Support Services Project in Antrim Hospital

In April 2017, UNISON and the Northern HSC Trust launched a new project to improve service delivery and the working lives of domestic and catering staff at the Antrim Hospital site.

This project is fundamentally about giving front-line workers (including domestic and catering staff) more say in the job they do. It is about ensuring that they are recognised as a key member of the healthcare team, and that increased attention is paid to their morale, job satisfaction, working environment, education, and the other pressures such as care needs and health problems.

By addressing these issues we believe that the project will have a positive impact on service delivery and patient satisfaction and can be a model of best practice to be used in other areas of the Trust such as portering.

To ensure that the views of staff inform everything that we do, a confidential survey was completed by nearly 200 staff in May 2017.

A series of staff focus groups are now scheduled to further inform the development of an action plan around a series of key themes:

- improving workplace relationships & role respect between staff groups, staff and managers, staff and patients/public;
- promoting teamwork and better communications;
- enhancing the sense of personal control workers have over their jobs;
- enhancing perceived fairness in the applications of policies and procedures;
- addressing educational and skills deficits and increase opportunities for job progression;
- improving aspects the physical working environment/general issues;
- Improve the health & wellbeing of staff.

In September the Partnership Steering Group benefited from the UNISON / Employer partnership training facilitated by Pamela Dooley.

■ UNISON / NI Ambulance Service Health & Wellbeing Partnership

In early 2017, the NI Ambulance Service and UNISON commenced discussions to develop a collaborative partnership project to improve the working lives of NIAS staff.

The project will have a particular focus on job satisfaction, health and wellbeing and is expected to lead to positive outcomes for staff,

management, and wider organisational effectiveness.

A joint activist/management training session was held in September and a series of staff meetings (rural and urban) will be held to facilitate the completion of staff surveys.

Equality and human rights

The Good Friday Agreement contained extensive commitments on equality and human rights. These permeated all 3 strands of the Agreement and the codes and operation of devolved Government. These commitments were central to UNISON support in the 1998 referendum.

The St Andrew's Agreement in 2006, while less vocal on the commitments, still retained equality as central. It also committed to a statutory anti-poverty strategy on the basis of objective need. Further Agreements such as Stormont House and Fresh Start, arising from continual political crises, have radically demoted equality and moved away from a Bill of Rights for NI thus reflecting the roll-back on equality and human rights which we highlighted in previous reports.

The absence of political will to embed equality and human rights commitments as a framework for Government has led to the collapse of the Executive and Assembly. We have reported over the years our concerns on the roll-back on equality and human rights and its direct impact on our members' jobs, rights and daily lives. Securing these commitments remains a UNISON priority.

The Impact of an EU Exit on equality and human rights protections, including the Human Rights Act: We cannot overstate the threat to our Peace Agreement of an exit from the EU and, in particular, a 'no deal' exit. The Good Friday Agreement sought to protect human rights in NI through requiring that the UK Government incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into law, with direct access to the courts and remedies for alleged violations of rights. This was done through the Human Rights Act 1998.

The Conservatives have repeatedly stated a desire to repeal the Human Rights Act 1998, with speculation that they will also seek that the UK leave the European Convention on Human Rights altogether

A repeal of the Human Rights Act would breach the terms of the Good Friday Agreement. Repeal of the Act and the UK leaving the Convention altogether becomes even more likely after an exit from the EU, as EU member states are required to be members of the European Convention on Human Rights, a requirement that would no longer apply to the UK.

The Good Friday Agreement also includes a principle of equivalence between human rights protections in NI and the Republic of Ireland. This principle is now at serious risk due to an EU exit, as the Republic of Ireland will remain subject to EU law and rights for workers will undoubtedly change and develop over time in response to changes in EU law.

By contrast, if NI is outside the EU and is not subject to EU law, rights for workers here will not develop in the same way. The Government have repeatedly stated a desire for the UK to no longer be subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, limiting the ability of workers in NI to take action against the state or their employer and meaning that workers' rights in NI will not develop in line with the decisions of the court.

An additional area which will be negatively affected in relation to the protection of rights and equality relates to the applicability of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. This charter protects a wide range of human rights, including socioeconomic rights and equality rights, and can be used to challenge both the institutions of the EU or the UK (where they act within the scope of EU law) if they have not acted in accordance with the Charter.

The Charter potentially offers greater protection of rights than the Human Rights Act, as it allows for legislation to not be applied where it conflicts with the Charter, due to the supremacy of EU law.

The EU Withdrawal Bill currently making its way through Parliament will not convert the Charter into UK law. UNISON is lobbying MPs to make sure that this does not happen, as it would weaken the human rights.

It is increasingly clear that the Government has no commitment to the equality and human rights agreements which are core to the Good Friday Agreement and which will be seriously undermined through exiting the EU. In this context, UNISON must continue to campaign to defend the Human Rights Act and a strong, enforceable Bill of Rights for NI must be brought forwards.

The promise of guaranteed human rights in a strong, enforceable Bill of Rights has been systematically blocked not only by local political parties but by successive UK governments. Continued rejection by the UK Government of a NI Bill of Rights due to the lack of local political consensus in particular at this point in the Peace Process is irresponsible.

A Bill of Rights for NI could be used to protect rights based in EU law in the future, and limit the power of Government to weaken those rights. It is now needed more than ever.

Supporting our allies: UNISON continues to make a major contribution to the debate on equality and human rights. Throughout the last 12 months, we have highlighted the key issues to Governments north, south and in the UK, including making key contributions on equality and rights issues to the All Island Civic Dialogue on EU exit convened by the Irish Government.

We have participated in, chaired and sponsored a range of conferences, seminars and round-table events discussing, in particular, the impact of an EU exit. We continue, with the support of the General Political Fund, to sponsor research and recommendations on steps necessary to reverse regression and to move forwards.



We continue to develop the equality and human rights agenda with our allies in the Equality Coalition, the Human Rights Consortium, CAJ, and the Practice and Participation of Rights in particular.

We are supporting the work of the newly formed NI Council for Racial Equality (NICRE), a body which has been established following the closure of NICEM due to a lack of continued Government funding, in its work focussing on the impact of an EU exit on the rights of EU migrant workers and their families to remain in NI, as well as the impact

on non-EU nationals through the possible introduction of a more restrictive immigration regime generally.

UNISON is also supporting the campaign being led by NICRE for non-British and non-Irish EU citizens living in NI to become eligible for Irish Citizenship, using the rights to citizenship set out under the Good Friday Agreement. The EU referendum result has caused uncertainty and fear for migrants living in NI, some of who have acquired, or are in the process of acquiring a permanent right to reside in the UK.

■ The Equality Coalition - Challenging equality breaches

The Equality Coalition is co-convened by UNISON and CAJ and has over 80 member organisations, a number of which are themselves umbrella groups - the largest of which is the trade union movement.

There has been, and remains, no other collective voice on equality in NI. There remains no other overarching consistent 'critical friend' of the equality oversight bodies, public authorities and local government.

Over the past year the Equality Coalition has facilitated information sharing, capacity building and engagement across the diverse groups working on equality issues. It has also raised the public profile of the equality framework in NI and using the equality complaints mechanisms has successfully reversed controversial budget cuts to public services.

Back in 1996, the Equality Coalition was instrumental in getting the 'Section 75' equality duty into the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and onto the statute books. More recently the Equality Coalition and its members have been at the forefront of seeking to protect and effectively operationalise and enforce the equality duty.

It has bi-monthly meetings, at which members can exchange information and discuss current equality issues. It also compiles and circulates information on public consultations, events, and equality news.



It also facilitates quarterly high level meetings with the Equality Commission. The Equality Coalition hosts several events to facilitate engagement with public authorities, build capacity and allow for networking between members.

UNISON GPF is supporting the following core work of the Equality Coalition.

Ensuring breaches of the Section 75 equality duty are responded to by formal complaints by affected persons: The Equality Coalition held an Equality schemes 'complaints' seminar and has held training with UNISON shop-stewards, as well as assisting a range of groups in taking complaints.

The Coalition, with our member groups, has been involved in significant 'failure to comply' challenges to the equality duty, such as challenging cuts to the Assembly Commission childcare scheme. This resulted in mitigating measures being put in place.

It has successfully challenged damaging changes to fuel poverty schemes; to breaches of the Executive's equality obligations in developing the draft Programme for

Government; and a continuing challenge to the introduction of the Bedroom tax.

Reforming and Enforcing Equality Schemes:

In 2016, the Coalition initiated a research project to assess the effectiveness of the current enforcement of the equality duty. This research will be launched in Autumn 2017, and is expected to significantly influence the Equality Commission's planned changes to its equality scheme complaints and investigations procedures and policies.

As part of the ongoing review by public authorities of their equality schemes, the Coalition produced a comprehensive submission seeking changes to standard schemes to provide for explicit provisions that:

- cover decisions on employment and procurement functions of public authorities;
- have explicit reference to the provision of women's only services and emphasising that funding for women's organisations is wholly consistent with the equality duty; and
- have a good relations definition that moves away from considering good relations in terms of what is politically contentious.



This has successfully led to changes to the Equality Schemes of public authorities including the Department of Health and Department of Finance, as well as several local councils.

Exit from the EU: As stated previously, an EU exit has enormous implications for rights and equality in NI. Shortly after the referendum result the Coalition organised an expert

roundtable, addressed by the coalition co-conveners (UNISON and CAJ) and a range of member groups along with academics to take stock of the implications.

In late 2016, the Coalition organised (in partnership with Ulster University) a major seminar 'BREXITING and Rights' addressed by the co-conveners and which considered six expert papers on the equality and human rights implications of the referendum. These included a NI specific model to retain equivalent levels of employment rights (which are devolved uniquely to NI).

This process has been followed by evidence giving to a number of UK and Irish Parliamentary committees and forums. The Coalition, supported by the UNISON GPF, has informed and developed public and political debate in relation to the impact that withdrawing from the EU will have for rights and equality protections.

Countering Incitement to hatred: A body of work has been initiated, and given new impetus in light of racist attacks linked directly to the referendum campaign, to reform NI 'incitement to hatred' legislation.

Whilst legislation has existed since 1970, and is more extensive than its counterpart in GB, there has only been one sole known conviction in all this time. Legislation currently sets a high threshold in the context of the harms of sectarianism, racism and homophobia in NI. Gender is excluded. The Equality Coalition expert paper on this was presented at a conference in Autumn 2017 – co-sponsored by UNISON, CAJ, the Equality Coalition and Queens University.

Equality enforcement: In addition, CAJ, which co-convenes the Equality Coalition alongside UNISON, has separately received funding for a three year equality enforcement project. They have recruited an equality enforcement project officer, who will provide advice and support to Equality Coalition members on taking complaints against public authorities for breach of their Equality Schemes. This will prove to be a very useful resource for UNISON.

■ Conflict and dealing with the past

Throughout 2017, UNISON has continued to respond to approaches from families and victims of the conflict seeking support for independent inquiries.

Key work in this area continues to be led by CAJ. Over the past year, progress on dealing with the past has continued to stall within the overall political crisis. The Historical Institutions Unit (HIU) and other institutions provided for within the Stormont House Agreement have yet to be taken forward, due to the UK Government wishing to impose a national security veto in relation to information given to victims' families from HIU investigations. In addition, the resources requested by the Lord Chief Justice to create a Legacy Inquests Unit and complete all

outstanding legacy inquests within the next 5 years have not been provided. These issues have all formed part of the current talks aimed at restoring devolution.

Regional Committee believes that it will take political, community and trade union engagement to attempt to resolve these issues. But it cannot be regarded as entirely separate from a political process which is denying social and economic rights to the people. As detailed above we are engaged in a range of current and future projects which can make significant, positive contributions, provided we can secure political will from all parties in Government.

■ Bill of Rights and Human Rights Consortium

Bill of Rights: Within our 2017 NI Assembly Election Manifesto we have continued to call on all parties and candidates to agree that the UK Government must implement a strong and enforceable Bill of Rights and apply equality and human rights frameworks to its negotiations with the NI Assembly and Executive on resource allocation for NI.

Commitment from the NI Executive and UK Governments to conduct future negotiations in this context is capable of reversing austerity and delivering a better deal for the people of NI, in support of our Peace Process. Politicians who reject this need to explain to their constituents why they are blocking their entitlement to decent social and economic outcomes and justice in dealing with the past.

The issue of a Bill of Rights has moved up the political agenda in recent months as part of the ongoing talks process to restore devolution. UNISON, alongside colleagues from CAJ and the Human Rights Consortium, will continue to press our local politicians on this issue. If, as in previous agreements, the parties demote the importance of a Bill of

Rights we will hold them to account for the failure to advance this issue.

Human Rights Consortium: UNISON continues to be represented on the Consortium Board by Thomas Mahaffy and we are also direct members.



- **EU Exit** - Since January 2017, the Consortium has briefed local political parties, lobbied politicians in the Dáil, House of Commons and House of Lords and produced materials outlining how a Bill of Rights could help protect EU rights. It has raised the issues directly with both the Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and participated, alongside UNISON, CAJ and the Equality Coalition in the Civic Dialogue in the Republic of Ireland.

The snap NI Assembly election, coupled with an accelerated EU exit process, helped to

create a conducive environment in which to campaign for a Bill of Rights for NI. The Consortium, in conjunction with the Equality Coalition, organised a human rights and equality hustings in UNISON, produced briefing materials for members and also produced its own 'manifesto' for the general Election.

UNISON is an active member of the human rights and EU exit working group' co-ordinated by the Consortium. To inform the work of the Group the Consortium has successfully secured funding from the Irish Government to map the work being undertaken in the community and voluntary sector to identify the rights and equality protections which are at risk in EU exit and to ensure that these are adequately protected once the UK has left the EU.

The Consortium and others (including CAJ, SDLP, Sinn Féin, Alliance, Green Party) took a legal case against the UK government towards the end of 2016. UNISON contributed funding. It ultimately joined with another case in the Supreme Court and while it ruled that Parliament must consent before Article 50 was triggered, the Supreme Court also ruled that the Sewel Convention (that the UK Parliament generally does not legislate on devolved matters without consulting the other legislatures) does not have legal standing.

In response to this development, the Consortium and its member organisations including UNISON lobbied both the House of Commons and House of Lords to insert amendments into the Bill allowing the Government to trigger Article 50 to ensure that adequate cognisance is taken of the peace settlement and human rights in the EU exit negotiations and eventual withdrawal agreement.

Unfortunately these attempts were unsuccessful, but more recently the Consortium and members have begun to seek possible amendments to the UK EU Withdrawal Bill that will convert EU law into UK law to achieve the same goals.

In recognition of the vacuum left by the absence of a functioning Assembly, and the cross cutting nature of rights and the various sectors impacted by EU exit, the Consortium hosted a conference in June in partnership with NICVA and with sponsorship from UNISON. The aim of this conference was to bring together various facets of civil society in NI to discuss practical, workable solutions and to produce a conference report, the learning from which can be used in lobbying and campaigning.

- *International Standards* - In May 2017 the UK was examined for compliance with human rights obligations under the Universal Periodic Review mechanism by the Human Rights Council at the United Nations.

Back in September 2016 the Consortium submitted its shadow report, setting out key issues including a failure to deliver the Bill of Rights, the threat to the Human Rights Act, the EU exit threat, and the failure of the NI Government to properly consider UN standards in its operations. This followed a period of working with members to ensure they were informed about the UPR process and to help them get involved.

In the period from January 2017 until the review in May the Consortium lobbied a wide number of member states who might consider making recommendations to the UK during the examination. It also specifically lobbied the Irish government in this regard. On the day of the Review, in conjunction with NIHRC and Equality Coalition it hosted a very well attended breakfast and live stream of the examination.

This resulted in recommendations being made by member states on the three key areas the Consortium focused on: the Bill of Rights for NI, the Human Rights Act and preservation of rights in the EU exit process. These recommendations were a very strong and clear endorsements of the Consortium's positions by an authoritative UN human rights body.

As usual the Consortium will continue to use these recommendations as a key element of our lobbying and advocacy on these issues. It will follow up on a regular basis to challenge the NI Executive and UK Government on their responsibilities to implement UN standards and recommendations.

In August the Consortium partnered with Disability Action and the NIHRC to host a live streaming of UNCRPD. Again this was a very well attended event and the Consortium's twitter activity was featured in several UK-wide blogs.

■ Participation and the Practice of Rights

The Participation and the Practice of Rights (PPR) organisation was founded in 2006 by UNISON's Inez McCormack. UNISON is represented on the Board by Head of Organising, Thomas Mahaffy. PPR puts the power of human rights at the service of those who need it most and helps marginalised groups use rights in practical ways to make real social and economic change in their communities.

UNISON works collaboratively with PPR on a range of issues identified for action through our Regional Council and Regional Committee. The following are some of its key areas of work over the past year to support groups to make widespread policy change on the ground.

UNISON community & voluntary sector branch human rights monitoring survey:

Following a series of workshops with community and voluntary sector branch members in Belfast and Derry, PPR have worked with UNISON to develop a human rights monitoring survey of conditions for workers across the sector.

The survey looks not only at employee terms and conditions, but quality of service, the ability of the sectors to advocate effectively on behalf of the most vulnerable and the independence of the sector. The survey was drawn up by frontline staff themselves and is

- **Rights in Practice** -In July the Consortium published polling that evidenced massive public support for human rights in NI. The polling commissioned by the Consortium shows that public opinion is not only clearly in favour of human rights but that the public also see human rights as a tool to protect the vulnerable and make our society fairer. The polling, which was conducted in 2016, was part of an omnibus survey which asked members of the public to outline their levels of agreement with a series of questions and statements.

open for UNISON members and non-members alike.



PPR held workshops with Community and Voluntary branch members to plan a targeted outreach strategy for the survey. PPR also delivered training on Effective Lobbying and Campaigning on how to build and deliver an effective campaign.

Action for equity: In May 2017, PPR were among three organisations shortlisted for the London School of Economics inaugural Action for Equity Award.

Human rights training: Since September 2016 PPR have trained 9 new groups (160+ people) to learn about our grassroots Human Rights Based Approach and initiate campaigns with varying levels of ongoing support.



This has presented opportunities to popularise PPR's work and in June 2017 PPR held an activist conference '*Housing and Accommodation Rights: Lessons from the Grassroots*' showcasing work PPR is involved in across Ireland, Scotland and links PPR activists had made in USA and South Africa through a Fellowship from the Social Change Initiative.

Inequality in social housing – Equality can't wait: The campaign for a strategy to address persisting inequality in social housing provision has advanced considerably since September 2016. Residents and homeless families in the Equality Can't Wait campaign used a planning application process to challenge the application for an 11 acre 'retail only' development in north Belfast.

PPR produced and publicised a key report on this development '*Build Homes Now! A sustainable solution for Dunnes/Hillview*' and successive consultation responses to popularise the policy and legislative basis for addressing inequality. PPR built a strong coalition supporting additional and new social housing at the site including homeless families and local residents, UNISON, five political parties, North Belfast Retailers and the Equality Coalition. The media profile of the campaign was raised with coverage in local and national press.

PPR also organised with approximately 120 residents to submit human rights complaints to the Housing Executive and Department for Communities over persisting housing rights abuses.

#Peoples Proposal campaign: The campaign aims to use devolved powers to put an end to the benefit sanction regime. Since last September PPR organised 2 public screenings of 'I, Daniel Blake' with a personalised

messages of support from the film's director Ken Loach, attended by over 300 people.

PPR organised over 200 people to attend actions at three different Benefits Offices presenting Human Rights Checklists to social security decision makers calling on them to apply human rights principles to their decisions prior to applying sanctions. Belfast and Derry & Strabane Councils passed motions condemning the sanctions regime and supporting the *#PeoplesProposal*.

PPR also engaged directly with frontline staff and gained support for the *#PeoplesProposal* through their union NIPSA. In August, PPR and UNISON conducted a panel discussion on benefit sanctions at a further showing of 'I, Daniel Blake' as part of Feile 2017.

Public procurement: PPR worked with officials in the Department of Finance to draft enhanced guidelines for public bodies to ensure that fully paid jobs and apprenticeships are guaranteed across the Executive's annual £3-4 billion procurement expenditure.

Housing for asylum seekers: PPR has developed an innovative pilot, in partnership with Choice Housing Association, CFNI, East Belfast Mission and Housing Executive, to house (at no cost) nine refused asylum seekers for a minimum of one year. This pilot is due to be launched in late 2017.

Mental health campaigns: Groups of people directly impacted by mental health launched two mental health campaigns and reports. The SAFER campaign ('*Families Bereaved by Suicide: The Right to Timely and Appropriate Support*') and the GP campaign ('*Beyond a Spin of the Wheel: Ensuring timely and appropriate mental health care from GPs*'). Both campaigns have received widespread political and community support.

In September 2016, the Mental Health Rights Campaign unveiled their *#MoreDoughNeeded* campaign calling for more funding for mental health services, with 600 signatories and

support from the full membership of the NI Assembly Health Committee.

Manifesto for You: PPR and young people from Belfast City Council's Youth Forum developed the 'Manifesto for You' - a

statement for social change that went on display at Belfast City Hall for three weeks.

Regional Committee wishes to embed the effective lobbying and campaigning training programme in the 2018 education programme.

■ Women at work and in society

Discrimination against women: The UK Government is scheduled to be examined by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2018. By this stage a report should have been submitted by the NI Government. As there is no Government, it is unlikely that there will be a report.

The position of women in NI continues to fall far behind that of women in the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. This impacts on our members in many ways at work, at home and in wider society. Women in NI are still concentrated in lower paid, lower status, often part-time work. They have higher rates of economic inactivity due to family and home commitments. They are the greatest losers in the event of cuts to the welfare system. They form 84% of UNISON NI membership.

Scotland and Wales have introduced legislation outlawing domestic violence and sexual abuse. Women in NI do not have this protection. Across GB women have abortion rights. Women in both jurisdictions in Ireland have none. NI has the lowest provision for childcare and women and children will bear the greatest impact of welfare cuts. In its incitement to hatred legislation unique to NI women are excluded. While the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland move ahead with gender pay auditing and progressive gender strategies NI stagnates.

Many previous CEDAW recommendations remain to be implemented. Fortunately, a range of women's organisations are actively pursuing the equality and anti-discrimination agenda and are also putting a focus on the rights of rural women. UNISON Women's Committee is encouraging direct involvement

of women members in a range of programmes promoted by these important groups.

Women's right to choose: To move the agenda forward a UNISON motion supporting the abortion rights campaigns in both NI and the Republic of Ireland was carried at the 2017 ICTU conference. Subsequently, we have been involved in a wide range of activity in support of both campaigns including the largest public demonstration held in the north in October 2017. Also in October, the trade union survey on abortion as a workplace issue will be launched in Belfast and Dublin.



Women's movement: We play our role in the wider women's movement on a host of initiatives aimed at highlighting the multiple discrimination faced by women in our society.

We are particularly fortunate to have an extensive spread of UNISON women members across many women's organisations. This creates deeper links between women and unions and women in the community.

International Women's Day 2017: In March 2017 UNISON hosted events in Galway House and other venues to mark International Women's Day and a strong UNISON delegation participated in the annual IWD march.

Violence against women: As reported in Section 1, we continue with our programme to challenge violence against women by seeking to influence Government, employers and through awareness raising within the union. Much of the policy work is co-ordinated alongside allies in the women's movement and in the field of equality and human rights. Roberta Magee and Pamela Dooley presented our UNISON/employer domestic violence projects to a fringe meeting at the 2017 NDC. Securing both legislation and workplace agreements is a priority.

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). We are submitting to the shadow report for the 2018 examination of the UK Government by CEDAW. Our main priorities on eliminating discrimination against women were set out in summary form in the UNISON Manifesto prepared for both the 2017 Assembly and general elections.

Impact of conflict on women: We continue to press the UK Government to include women in NI in its action plans for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 on women in conflict. In 2016 we made this one of the core demands in both the UNISON NI General Election and Assembly election manifestos and will continue with this work until the goal is achieved.



Solidarity

■ UNISON Solidarity Group

UNISON Solidarity Group continues to grow. There have been two meetings to date with the third scheduled before the end of the year. However, group members are also involved in an extensive range of other solidarity groups and initiatives on behalf of UNISON.

In September 2017 the joint regions seminar, was hosted in Liverpool by the North West region.

Group members and branch delegates took part in the ICTU global summer school 2017 in Wexford.

In addition, group members have hosted in fringe meetings at ICTU conferences, the TUFU conference and a range of seminars, film nights, and have hosted visiting international delegations.

We were pleased to host Omar Barghout, the Director of the BDS campaign, at the 2017 ICTU Biennial Conference and also to participate alongside the recently released trade unionist Huber Ballesteros at the same conference. We were part of an historic event in First Presbyterian Church, Rosemary Street Belfast on the eve of the conference when both Omar and Hubert shared a platform.

■ Cuba

We continue to work with Cuba Solidarity. This work becomes even more important in the face of further hostility to Cuba from the US.

We are part of an organising group which is hosting Aleida Guevara in November 2017 to mark the 50th anniversary of Che Guevara's death. Aleida Guevara is the daughter of Che Guevara. Aleida is a paediatrician, working at

Havana's William Solar Children's Hospital and has also worked on medical brigades in Angola, Ecuador and Nicaragua. Aleida will speak in Belfast on Monday 6 November, 7pm at First Presbyterian Church, Rosemary St, Belfast.

Chair of our Global Solidarity Group Conor McCarthy, has also set up a meeting between Aleida Guevara, other paediatricians and the senior management of the Belfast Trust to pursue our proposal that the health service should look to Cuba to secure some of the missing clinical posts.

■ Palestine

We have had another year of intensive work and direct action in support of Palestine. Our branches participate in our own Global Solidarity Group, Trade Union Friends of Palestine and in direct action, political lobbying and procurement bargaining.

In addition to hosting Omar Barghouti, we met with Iyad Burnat who is head of the Bil'in Popular Committee and a leader in the village's non-violent popular resistance. Three of Iyad's children have been shot and he is a constant target but continues the campaign of non-violent resistance. He is seeking support to establish a centre for non-violent resistance in Bil'in. It is a large project and we are currently advising him alongside TUFPP on possible funding sources.

In Solidarity with Palestine – Ending European complicity with Israeli violations of international law: In November 2016, as a result of the work of Eamonn McMahon Secretary of TUFPP and the European network, this inaugural conference took place in Brussels.

We sent a delegation of 10 reps and were joined by UNISON reps from other regions and the NEC International Committee. 22 unions from 8 different countries took part in the event which also hosted all 5 trade union organisations from Palestine. Participation in the European Network has grown and arrangements are underway for the second conference.



TUFPP is currently planning two significant conferences, one premiering the film on Gaza produced by Max Blumenthal and Dan Cohen with them and Ilan Pappé as keynote speakers, and the other on the abuse of Palestinian children – including routine night-time arrests – as a deliberate Israeli policy.

In Spring 2017 we supported Roberta Magee and Alastair Long as our next set of activists to take part in the **TUFPP Ambassadors programme** visit to Palestine. Both have reported to sessions organised through ICTU and will present to the 2017 Regional Council. The next Ambassadors visit takes place in November, where we will be represented on the joint union delegation by Margaret McKee and Kevin Hillick.

Kevin Hillick of Down Education continues to host delegations of young Palestinians as part of the **Anti-racism World Cup**. This year's event was supported by the NEC international committee and Mairin Power from the international department attended the event.

The Royal Hospitals branch again hosted the **Belfast Hill Walk in Support of Gaza**. The event, now in its 12th year, is part of the Feile 2017 programme and continues to raise funds for humanitarian aid for children in Gaza.

Lobbying Government: In July 2017 Patricia McKeown and Anne Speed, along with Eamonn McMahon and Denis Hynes from TUIFP north and south, met with the Irish Government Department of Foreign Affairs to push for more pressure to be exerted to secure Palestinian rights.



Omar Barghouti with the UNISON delegation at ICTU Conference, July 2017

Most recently, through ICTU, we called on the Irish Government to strenuously intervene when a group of Irish humanitarian activists were deported by the Israeli Government. This included our own member and Director of the Centre for Global Studies, Stephen McCloskey. It is clear that the Israeli Government is ramping up punitive action against humanitarian and human rights activists supporting the Palestinian people.

UNISON’s bargaining agenda includes our demand for implementation of the NIHR recommendations on **human rights and procurement**. This includes challenging on the supply chain and the award of contracts to companies profiting from illegal occupation. We are now part of a significant global campaign challenging Hewlett Packard. This work is being undertaken by the lead negotiators in public services covering the main public service unions.

Aside from the repressive legislation introduced in Israel against Israelis involved in supporting BDS, other Governments including the UK are attempting to impede our right to Boycott. In June 2017 we celebrated when the Courts granted Judicial Review to a range of organisations challenging the UK Government’s attempts to restrict local councils from pursuing boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against the state of Israel through their pension schemes.

This is a triumph for the BDS movement and is hailed as a victory for Palestine, for local democracy, and for the rule of law.

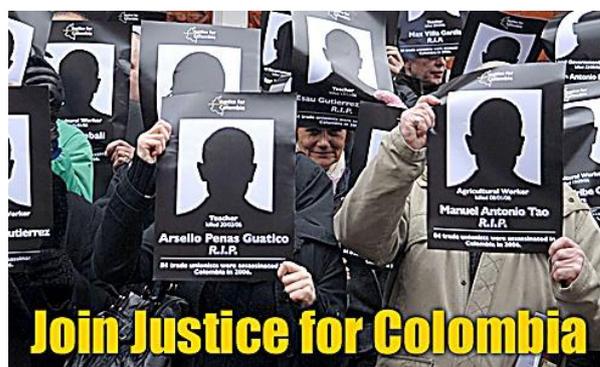
■ Colombia

We continue to support Justice for Colombia and the trade union campaign challenging inequality, denial of human rights, and in particular the assault on trade unionists, human rights activists and peace activists. We also remain involved in the trade union / NI cross-party initiative established by Justice for Colombia (JfC) in support of the Colombian Peace Process.

As reported above we were particularly pleased to support and participate in the events organised around the attendance of Huber Ballesteros at the ICTU Conference 2017. This marked Huber’s first international engagement since his release.

We were also delighted that both he and Omar Barghouti met the President of Ireland Michael D Higgins and shared a joint platform together on the eve of the conference.

Later in the year Huber was also received by UNISON’s International Committee in London.



Despite the peace accord the killings continue on a daily basis with trade unionists, human rights activists and journalists remaining key targets. This makes the work of JfC all the more critical.

Last year, branches in our region had the highest level of affiliation to JfC. At this year's Council meeting Regional Committee will be reinforcing the need for our branches to re-affiliate to this important campaign.

JfC has reorganised its governance structures to encompass the organisation across both islands and the Regional Secretary has been invited to join the new JfC governing committee which will hold its first meeting in London in November 2017.

■ Refugees and asylum seekers

We continue with our support work with refugees and asylum seekers including access to our ILETS English classes.

Over the past couple of years more than 30 medical professionals, including surgeons, have taken part in the programme. Because of their status and immigration regulations they are barred from working. This is a totally unacceptable situation as they have the fundamental human right to work.

Consequently we have opened discussions with the health service to determine how we might be able to open employment opportunities for them, especially at a time when the health service has critical shortages of medical personnel.

In April 2017 we held "Refugees at home and abroad" – an event organised as an opportunity to learn about the people who have been forced to flee their homes due to war and civil unrest.

Christine McCarthy from Oxfam explored the global picture and Aidan Crawford, President of SVP spoke about his work in refugee camps in Greece and how donations from NI have helped make a difference. At the event asylum seekers and refugees shared their stories.

SVP also provided a shipment of medical equipment to hospitals in Syria which was supported by UNISON health branches in the RVH and Belfast City Hospitals.

Through UNISON centrally, our international affiliations and through ICTU, we continue to press for justice for refugees and asylum seekers.

This includes our demands that both parts of the island at least take the quota of refugees that they committed to but have not met, our demand for the ending of direct provision in the Republic and the detention camps in NI. We also continue to press for the right to work.



Working in the wider trade union movement

■ ICTU

Our main work with other unions continues to be through the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and its Committees and in the NI-wide public sector negotiating bodies.

Executive Council of Congress and Standing Orders Committee: Patricia McKeown and Anne Speed were both re-elected to the Executive Council at the 2017 Biennial Conference. Denis Keatings was re-elected to both the Standing Orders Committee. Table 18 sets out UNISON involvement in the Congress.

ICTU Biennial Conference 2017: The 2017 Biennial Conference was held in Belfast in July. UNISON's motions on EU Exit and on abortion rights were extensively debated and carried unanimously. The UNISON delegation made significant contributions throughout the agenda. The 2018 Northern Biennial Conference is scheduled for Derry in April.

Trades Councils: Regional Committee continues to encourage UNISON activists to become involved in local Trades Councils and the ICTU campaign to re-establish Trades Councils is proving successful. Trades Councils are playing an important role in encouraging workers and communities to participate in the campaign to protect the welfare state and to oppose cuts in public services.

May Day: The 2017 week-long trade union Festival culminated in the annual May Day march. Once again UNISON branches and self-organised groups fully participated in the week long events including a film showing and the return of the 'Belong Project'. Members turned out in large numbers to represent UNISON on the May Day march.

The ICTU 'Better work, Better Lives' campaign to protect peoples' jobs and create new employment has been launched. UNISON has nominated 56 lay activists across NI to play a co-ordinating role over the next 2 years.

The campaign will focus on decent work, decent welfare, public service investment and breaking the public sector pay cap. The specific union campaigns such as UNISON's 'Pay up now' campaign will continue to run alongside the wider ICTU campaign.

Events and seminars: Throughout the year, members and activists participated in ICTU events and seminars on a wide range of trade union priorities including the implications of EU exit, equality and human rights, health and safety, defending jobs and services and international solidarity.



Ant-racism World Cup in Belfast, August 2017

Table 18 - UNISON representation on ICTU structures

ICTU Structure and purpose	UNISON representation
ICTU Executive ¹	Patricia McKeown; Anne Speed
NI Committee, ICTU ²	Patricia McKeown; Anne Speed
ICTU Equality & Human Rights Group ³	Patricia McKeown
ICTU Standing Orders Committee	Denis Keatings
ICTU Women's Committee ⁴	Anne Speed and Margaret McKee (Danielle McCusker sub)
ICTU Health Services Committee ⁵	Anne Speed (Chair); Patricia McKeown; Joe McCusker; Brian Ferguson; Denis Keatings; Maura McKenna
ICTU Education TU Group ⁶	Anne Speed (Chair); Brian Ferguson
ICTU Public Services Group	RMT, senior lay reps and regional organisers
ICTU Private Sector group	Brian Ferguson
ICTU Disability Committee ⁷	Marjorie Trimble
ICTU LGBT Committee ⁸	Fidelma Carolan
ICTU Retired Members	Archie Thomson, Angela Boorman
ICTU Youth Forum ⁹	Sinead Liddy
ICTU Education Officers Group ¹⁰	Fidelma Carolan
ICTU Health & Safety Committee ¹¹	Barbara Martin
ICTU Solidarity Committee	Mary Ferris; Dominic Murray; Eamonn McMahon (TUFP)
ICTU Education alliance ¹²	Anne Speed and nominated reps



¹Main policy making body – all island

²Main policy making body for NI

³NICICTU sub-committee on full range of equality and human rights policies and practices

⁴Advisory Committee to NIC and jointly with Women's Committee RI to Executive Council on women's rights and participation

⁵Main health policy committee for NI. Reports to NIC

⁶Main education policy committee for NI. Report to NIC.

⁷Advisory Committee to NIC

⁸Advisory Committee to NIC

⁹Advisory Committee to NIC

¹⁰Liaison group for all NI TU education officers

¹¹Advisory group to NIC

¹²Campaign group on education policy in NI comprising TU and affiliates.



“Developing an efficient and effective union”

Finance & Managing Resources

■ Summary Accounts – Lay Activity Fund

The Regional accounts for the year ending 31 December 2016 have been distributed to all branches and delegates. The UNISON NI lay activity budget for 2016 was £104,700.72. The allocation for 2017 is £103,060.74. At the start of each year the budget for all categories of lay activity is set by Regional Committee and reviewed on a quarterly basis.

The Regional Committee affiliates to a range of organisations and also makes donations on individual and group requests in line with UNISON policy. Where appropriate, branches are invited to support the relevant project or cause. A total of £3,200 was donated to projects through the following organisations:

- Gambia Schools Project
- Women’s Information NI
- Cork Mother Jones Committee
- Quire Belfast LGBT
- TUF
- Tar Isteach
- Malawi (Craigavon Health)
- Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy
- Anti Racism world cup
- BSST (School in Bethlehem)
- CAF
- Rally for Choice
- Marie Curie
- Foyle Hospice
- Little Princess Trust
- Onam Festival (Kerala Beat)

■ Branch finance

All branches submitted their annual return on time and within rule. For the third year in a row NI was the only region to achieve this and the only region where all branches submitted their returns using OLBA. A number of branches were audited and further audits are scheduled before the end of the year. Common issues raised included general issues of good practice on recording expenditure decisions and filing receipts.

Regional Committee has drawn all issues to the attention of the relevant branches and

continues to offer support to all branches to enable them to meet the new requirement to record all budgets on the OLBA system.

Training on branch activity-based budgeting was carried out at all joint branch assessments in 2017 and additional tailored training is taking place for those Branch Treasurers requiring additional support to translate the agreed branch budgets on to the OLBA system. A number of branches qualified for an uplift in 2017.

■ Income and RMS

Total income returned to Head Office was £3,833,005. This represents an increase year on year. Total income returned to branches for 2016 was £919,437.

In the course of the year a number of branches have been assisted with queries to HQ on matters relating to branch income, full membership figures and income allocation queries.

■ Premises

Galway House: A draft business plan has been prepared for the NEC Finance Committee with proposals for extending activity in Galway House. Architects are currently working on draft plans and a further meeting with UNISON Estates is scheduled before the end of the year.

We continue to host a range of events for lay structures, partner organisations, other unions and external users. This has included:

- NI Anti Poverty Network
- TUIP Conference
- NIUSE / Equality Commission
- Human Rights Consortium
- The Open University
- Participation in the Practice of Rights
- Four Seasons

North West Support Centre: The North West Support Centre continues to be the

prime venue for UNISON branches in the North West. It is also the location for Derry Trades Council and our most regular external organisation is the Derry Well Woman Centre. Other organisations booking the centre include:

- The Law Centre
- James Connolly Youth
- The Open University

The Council for Ethnic Minorities continue to base their North West operation in the UNISON centre as part of their partnership arrangements. Income generation from our North West Centre continues to outstrip the Regional Centre in Belfast.

We continue to promote and implement UNISON's Green Policy in the management of our premises and throughout our administrative systems.

■ Administrative systems and front-line communication

In-house systems and protocols: Following the upgrade of SharePoint we are updating our filing and retrieval system on an ongoing basis. We continue to promote best practice in health and safety on both sites and for staff in the field. Members will have noticed glitches in the web-based IT systems during summer 2017. This has largely been resolved and the IT equipment update continues on a rolling basis.

Websites and social media: The new stand-alone NI website was launched early in 2017. It has a clear, easy to navigate layout and allows branches to both download campaign posters and leaflets and upload newsletters or details of upcoming events

The 'update your details' feature allows members to contact us with new information. The Education Programme and AGM newsletters are displayed in digital format for members to download and there is an option to apply online for courses. The website also highlights our

unique partnership programmes, our work on equality and human rights and our self organised groups.

UNISON is trending well on Social Media and our following on Twitter has increased and includes members, politicians, media, and equality groups. The media in particular have accessed information from UNISON social media accounts during our campaigns in addition to traditional methods of distribution. The incoming Regional Committee will consider an updated media strategy protocol aimed at better co-ordination between the Regional Centre and branches. We are also continuously updating advice to branches to ensure that UNISON social media accounts and websites across NI are monitored to avoid abuse.

Facebook has had many shares and activity this year mostly due to rallies such as PRIDE and Marriage Equality and demos against cuts. We continue to get members contacting us through the Facebook messaging service asking for advice, call backs or even how to join.

E-communication with branches and members: We continue to build our data base of email address and mobile phone/text numbers. Data is cleansed on an ongoing basis and we currently have up to date details for more than 50% of the membership. This has proved very important for a range of surveys conducted by us in 2017 and has significantly increased member participation.

Distribution and print: The Regional Centre continues to provide a service for branches and during 2017 circulated branch newsletters to all members during the AGM season. The postage costs were met by the Branches. In addition an election was conducted on behalf of three branches.

■ Staffing

Thanks: Regional Committee records its thanks to all our staff for their work throughout 2016/2017. During the year we were joined by a number of temporary staff providing cover for maternity leave and long-term sickness. We extend thanks to Emma Patterson-Bennett, Paul McAllister and Sharrona Loughins for their contribution during this period. In addition, some members of the admin staff team were

seconded to the Fighting Fund team for a 12 month period.

Fighting fund and Organising fund: A range of branches individually, or in combination, made successful bids to the 2016/17 Fighting Fund enabling us to appoint nine local organisers attached to eight projects. As reported elsewhere this has been a highly successful project and the bid for 2017/18 has been submitted.

Our current staff team is:

Administration

- Michele Bradford – Regional Administrator
- Tracey Bryson - Secretary (PT)
- Caroline Butler – Building maintenance & Catering
- Anne Campbell – Team Support Worker
- Gemma Curran – Telephonist Receptionist (PT)
Seconded as Fighting Fund Local Organiser
- Alison Downey – Telephonist Receptionist (PT)
- Deirdre Graham – RMS Supervisor
- Shelley King - Secretary (PT) / Receptionist (PT)
- Roslyn McCartney – RMS / Organising
- Norma Neal - Secretary (PT)
- Brenda Peel – RMS Clerk
- Liz Robinson – Senior Secretary

Specialist

- John Patrick Clayton – Policy & Research
- Sharrona Loughins – Communications

Regional Management Team

- Patricia McKeown – Regional Secretary
- Thomas Mahaffy – Head of Organising & Development
- Anne Speed – Head of Bargaining and Representation

Organising team

- Marianne Buick - Area Organiser
- Fidelma Carolan - Regional Education Officer
- Nuala Conlon – Regional Organiser
- Nathalie Donnelly – Local Organiser
- Brian Ferguson – Regional Organiser
- Danielle McCusker – Area Organiser
- Joe McCusker - Regional Organiser
- Susan Neill – Area Organiser
- Caitlin NiChathail – Area Organiser (PT)
- Una NiMhearain – Area Organiser (PT)

Fighting Fund Local Organisers

- Noeleen Beattie
- Claire Bolt
- Billy Caughey
- Gemma Curran
- Sean Fairley
- Angela Gribben
- Orlaith McCarthy
- Alan McClean
- Janet Orr