



UNISON



2016 NI Assembly Election Manifesto

UNISON is the leading trade union in the UK with over 1.3 million members, 40,000 of them in NI. Our membership includes public service workers in health and social care, the education and higher education services; local government; youth justice; private sector service suppliers; and the community and voluntary sectors. 84% of our membership in NI are women. We set out below key concerns of our members across a wide range of campaigns. We are not prepared to accept the sustained attack on public services and on the pay and conditions of our members who provide them. We are not prepared to accept growing poverty and inequality. We seek endorsement from parties and candidates on these issues and will publish responses to our membership.

Commitment to work together in Government

Over the past two years we have lobbied Government and parties, and our members have taken to the streets in public protest over the failure of our elected politicians to work collaboratively in the best interests of the people, thus precipitating political crisis.

In this election we seek clear commitments from all candidates, irrespective of party, that they will work together to produce the cross-cutting policies, strategies and outcomes required to improve the social and economic position of all people in NI.

Key strategies include:

- **prioritising and properly funding a public health model;**
- **committing to a real Living Wage, as part of a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy based on objective need;**
- **protecting public services and jobs;**
- **creating a more equal society by implementing, once and for all, the Peace Agreement commitments on equality and human rights. It is of particular concern that neither the Stormont House Agreement nor**

the Fresh Start Agreement have been Equality Impact Assessed or tested against a human rights framework for the impact that austerity is inflicting on large sections of NI society.

We are asking all our Assembly candidates:

- ✓ **In a new NI Assembly will you and your party commit to working with all other parties to produce positive equality and rights-based outcomes for the people?**
- ✓ **What steps will you and your party take to ensure that the UK Government reverses the structural adjustment conditions attached to the Fresh Start Agreement, particularly by ensuring that it is Equality Impact Assessed?**
- ✓ **What steps will you and your party take to redress the current cuts to the 'block grant' and resist further cuts?**
- ✓ **What steps will you and your party take to seek improvements in the Barnett formula and/or protect NI from adverse impact in any change?**
- ✓ **What additional elements of financial devolution will you and your party advocate?**

The health and well-being of the People

Nothing is more important than the health and well-being of the people. However, what was a **Number 1 Priority** in the Programme for Government was dropped in 2007. Today large sections of our population are living with the consequences, including:

- growing health inequalities, lower life expectancy, increasing premature death rates

and spiralling suicide rates, particularly for working class people in areas of disadvantage;

- 400,000 people on hospital waiting lists;
- crisis in social care, particularly for older people;
- funding crisis in essential, additional services provided by the community and voluntary sector;
- growing inequality in educational outcomes;
- a crisis in social housing;

- mass job loss across all employment sectors;
- growing poverty, rural and urban, and growing in-work poverty.

To address this situation, we need a model of public health which requires not only radical reform of the health and social care system, but also a radical change in the way all Government Ministers and Departments take their share of responsibility for a new 'outcome based' Programme for Government.

Radical reform of health and social care

It is universally accepted that current structures are not fit for purpose, and cannot deliver performance, standards of care, financial stability or address inequalities. UNISON is calling for:

- the abolition of the internal market in health and social care and the costly and unnecessary commissioner/provider split, including Trusts;
- its replacement with a public health model delivered on NHS founding principles within the public sector, with eradicating health inequalities as a central goal;
- an end to outsourcing health services and jobs to the private sector - the health and well-being of the people is not for profit making;
- an end to the 'consultation farce' and its replacement with real and resourced democratic engagement with the people – including patients, clients, residents, relatives, health workers and their trade unions;
- transparent spending, funding and resource allocation not only in health but across Government Departments; and
- open, honest and transparent information to workers, patients and clients and an end to the disgraceful practice of loosening and manipulating key targets, such as waiting times, in an attempt to gloss over the current crises.

Our education services

Over the past 4 years we have lost £300 million needed for our vital services. Transport has been withdrawn in some areas, music therapy in others. Special programmes designed to give equality to children with special needs have been cut and cancelled. Both teaching and non-teaching staff in their thousands face redundancies and cuts. Almost one-third of our children live on or below the poverty line.

What steps will you and your Party take:

- ✓ To restore the health and well-being of the people as the Number 1 priority in the Programme for Government?
- ✓ To implement a new Public Health Model on a cross-Government basis with clear targets and timetables to redress the inequalities outlined above?

What steps will you and your Party take:

- ✓ To support UNISON's proposals for structural change, strategic planning and delivery and open-book accounting?
- ✓ To ensure real engagement with the people, health workers and their unions alike?
- ✓ To back our critical demand that any form of privatisation of health & social care is wrong and that the NHS should be free at the point of use and delivered by publicly accountable and directly employed public healthcare workers?
- ✓ To support increased funding for health & social care in NI to eliminate the scandals of waiting times, and restricted domiciliary care visits?
- ✓ To back increasing the funding for mental health which is 50% lower than England?
- ✓ To immediately challenge the scandal of:
 - only 70% compliance with the 4 hour waiting time targets in A&E, compared with 90%+ in GB?
 - the long-term consistent failure in achieving the 62 day target for the delivery of cancer treatment?
- ✓ To address best practice social care outcomes by, for example, endorsing the implementation of NICE guidance that specifies a minimum 30 minute domiciliary care visit?



Following years of underinvestment, the £16 million reduction in the Higher Education budget during the current year is leading to further cuts to student places and courses. We have major shortages in nursing and social work places.

What steps will you and your Party take:

- ✓ To support an education system that delivers to disadvantaged areas, is non-selective, and ensures equality of outcomes?
- ✓ 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 of outcomes?

- ✓ To respond to the clear evidence that nutritional meals for all pupils will raise outcomes and public health?
- ✓ To protect and strengthen the work of classroom, nursery and special needs staff?
- ✓ To reverse plans to curtail Special Educational Needs services for pre-school children?
- ✓ To maximise access to higher education by restoring grant funding & sustain grants for those in need rather than conversion to loans?
- ✓ To guarantee that graduate nurse training will still be grant funded?
- ✓ To remedy the ongoing gaps in literacy and numeracy outcomes?
- ✓ To promote the training and development of the next generation of social care workers?

Workers rights are human rights

The gap between rich and poor in our society has widened. We are in danger of losing an entire generation of post Peace Agreement children and young people. It is no longer permissible for parties or the Assembly or the Executive to contest equality and human rights. This must become the essential framework of the Programme for Government.

A real living wage: To lift what has become a workforce defined by low pay and poor conditions, our Government needs to urgently introduce a real Living Wage based on the recommendations of the Living Wage Foundation – currently £8.25 per hour as opposed to the UK Government figure of £7.20. The Scottish and Welsh Governments are further ahead with this work.

Abolish zero-hours contracts: Improvements in pay are easily negated by zero-hours contracts. UNISON calls on the NI Assembly to follow New Zealand which has taken the lead in abolishing these exploitative contracts.

Protection for transferred workers: There has been deep resistance from senior civil servants to sign-off on an agreement to protect new workers where jobs have been transferred from the public to the private sector. This has happened despite commitments to the trade union movement from the First and Deputy First Minister to outlaw two-tier terms and conditions. It is time for our political leadership to remove this block on workers' rights.

Protection of workers in the supply chain: The NI Government spends millions annually on public procurement. The NI Human Rights Commission has produced a comprehensive set of recommendations to protect the rights of workers at home and throughout the international supply chain. There is an obligation on the Assembly and

the Executive to immediately implement these recommendations and to ensure that all parts of the public service follow suit. It is not acceptable for public money to be spent on any contract which exploits or endangers workers and removes their rights to equality of opportunity and their human rights.

Gender pay equality: We call on the Executive to build on the framework for gender pay reporting in the NI Employment Bill by ensuring mandatory reporting and clear action plans for compliance on equal pay legislation.



Jobs and the long-term unemployed: A significant business plan to build on the successful UNISON / Belfast HSC Trust Health Employment Partnership, which worked with communities in West Belfast and Greater Shankill, and created real jobs in the health service for the long-term unemployed, has now been with three Government Departments for more than three years. The extension of this programme across Belfast and then across the entire health service is being blocked at a time when there are growing vacancies and a critical need for jobs in our most disadvantaged communities. UNISON is calling on the Executive to progress this plan.

Jobs and investment: The recent report "A Fresh Start for Equality: The equality implications of the Stormont House Agreement on the two main communities", commissioned by the Equality Coalition (convened by UNISON and CAJ) presents a disturbing picture of growing disadvantage building up major fair employment problems.

This significant work by Dr R McVeigh and Prof. C Bell, presents a framework for action and a real challenge to the Assembly and Executive on resource allocation, Government investment and inward investment. It is not permissible for disadvantaged working class communities, Catholic and Protestant, to be left behind. We are calling for genuine, cross-party support for new initiatives based on objective need.

Childcare: Women in NI still bear the major role of unpaid primary carer. Access to affordable and appropriate childcare provision is too long outstanding. UNISON calls on the Assembly and the Executive to develop a childcare strategy that delivers adequate, accessible and affordable childcare. We support the considered demands set out in the Women's Manifesto and call on the Assembly and Executive to give real effect to these core demands which will begin to discharge the Government's responsibilities under the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Outlawing discrimination in employment:

Despite 40 years of anti-discrimination laws and 18 years of a statutory duty on Government to promote equality of opportunity, workers and prospective workers in all categories covered by

S.75 of the NI Act 1998 are still experiencing discrimination. UNISON is calling on the Assembly and the Executive to face up to its domestic and international obligations to eradicate this growing problem in our society.

What steps will you and your Party take:

- ✓ To challenge growing in-work poverty by introducing a real Living Wage of £8.25 per hour for all workers, irrespective of age?
- ✓ To support legislation to abolish zero-hours contracts for all workers?
- ✓ To protect new workers in transferred services from lower pay and worse conditions than existing workers?
- ✓ To implement the recommendations of the NIHRC on public procurement and human rights?
- ✓ To ensure mandatory reporting on equal pay and compliance with equal pay laws?
- ✓ To support the UNISON / Belfast HSC Trust Health Employment Partnership, which has worked with communities in West Belfast and Greater Shankill to create real jobs in the health service for the long-term unemployed from areas of greatest disadvantage?
- ✓ To ensure that all Government and inward investment plans are Equality Impact Assessed on the basis of objective need?
- ✓ To deliver a comprehensive Childcare Strategy and action plan in line with the demands set out in the Women's Manifesto?
- ✓ To agree action plans to implement (on a cross-party basis) Government and public sector legal obligations to promote equality across all policies, strategies and plans?

Equality and human rights for all

For many decades campaigners for equality and human rights have demonstrated that Government commitment, when translated from rhetoric to reality, makes for more equal, just, peaceful and safer societies. This position has now been adopted by some of its most influential opponents in the past such as the IMF, the OECD, and the World Bank. There is also a growing realization in these and other quarters that austerity has immediate and long-term impacts that are detrimental for the people.

It is time for the NI Assembly and the Executive to catch up on this growing realisation. It is time for our political representatives to fully implement the commitments in the Good Friday and St Andrew's Agreements. Failure to do so is compounding inequality for their most disadvantaged constituents and making life more difficult for all their constituents

across all communities. One of the most significant decisions our Government can take to challenge growing discrimination and inequality is to reject austerity.

The equality and human rights issues focusing on social and economic rights and justice listed below are not exhaustive but have been particularly highlighted by UNISON members, in addition to our core demands on public services and in particular health, social services and education.

Bill of Rights: A strong and inclusive Bill of Rights for NI remains a key undelivered commitment from the Good Friday Agreement. We call on all parties and all 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 the resource allocation for NI.

Commitment from the NI 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 and 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.

Victims, survivors and dealing with the past:

UNISON's membership encompasses victims and survivors of the conflict from all groups. The Peace Agreement commitment to address their issues was a key factor in their support for it. The inadequate proposals arising, in particular, from the Fresh Start Agreement do not discharge the commitments made. We support the recommendations of the CAJ and call on the Assembly and the Executive to finally deal with a matter that is fundamental to peace and reconciliation.

Women and the conflict: The UK Government has failed to implement 'UN Resolution 1325 on Women and Conflict', in NI. This resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention of conflicts and in peace negotiations, peace-building, peace-keeping and post-conflict reconstruction. We call on the NI Executive to press the UK Government to include women in NI in its action plans.

Abuse inquiries: The rights of the victims and survivors of institutional abuse must be fully protected and given a high priority by any incoming Government. UNISON supports, in full, the range of demands made by victims and survivors on remedy and redress and the very clear demands for full and transparent investigation, including full disclosure from UK Departments and agencies.

What steps will you and your Party take:

- ✓ **To honour the commitments made to equality and human rights in our Peace Agreements?**
- ✓ **To press the UK Government to implement a Bill of Rights for NI?**
- ✓ **To establish a genuine process to address the issues raised by victims and survivors and to deal with the unfinished business of the Past?**
- ✓ **To press the UK Government to implement UN Resolution 1325 in NI?**
- ✓ **To support the demands of victims and survivors of institutional abuse on remedy and redress and full disclosure from UK Departments and agencies?**

Weak and missing equality strategies: UNISON is now asking "when is a strategy not a strategy?" The answer appear to be that if it involves delivering rights for any of the groups captured by S.75 of the NI Act 1998, then it will either be a weak strategy

with no action plan, or a totally contested strategy that simply does not exist. This is not acceptable. UNISON members across all these groups want genuine commitments for action from the politicians they elect.



Anti-poverty strategy based on objective need:

Growing poverty and inequality in NI is staggering. An entire generation has been left out of any 'peace dividend.' This is a core issue for UNISON. NI is the only part of the UK experiencing an increase in child poverty and its legacy of life-long damage to their early development, education and career prospects.

In 2015, the CAJ succeeded in a landmark legal challenge against the NI Executive for failing to adopt a strategy to tackle poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation on the basis of objective need (the Anti-poverty Strategy). This strategy must now be produced with the full participation of those affected and their organisations campaigning to eliminate poverty. It must pay particular attention to dealing with welfare cuts, low pay, the provision of public services and the creation of employment.

Right to choose: UNISON supports a woman's right to choose. Recently the NIHRC succeeded in its legal challenge against the NI Executive. The High Court has ruled that NI abortion laws breach Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. We fully support the 'Trust Women' campaign which is calling for legislation to be brought forward to bring us into compliance with Article 8 and is calling on our MLAs to trust women to make decisions about their own lives, to press for legal change to allow greater abortion access, and to push for a free vote.

Domestic violence: UNISON has led the way in developing workplace programmes with health employers to challenge domestic violence. The Executive has yet to match this commitment despite over 28,000 domestic violence incidents, and nearly 3,000 sexual offences reported to police in NI each year, including over 700 offences of rape. We work with our allies to challenge this growing evil. We support the demands in the Women's Manifesto and call on the Executive and Assembly to bring forth action plans to implement them.

Marriage equality: UNISON members overwhelmingly support marriage equality and they have been at the forefront of the campaign. It is unacceptable that an issue of equality and human rights, which has now won the support of the Assembly, should be blocked by a parliamentary mechanism which was created more to protect equality than deny it.



Housing: The serious religious inequality in social housing in NI has attracted the attention of both the United Nations and the European Commission. That the NI Executive and DSD continue to show disregard for the findings of these authorities is an indication of the growing levels of unaccountability and non-evidence based decision making at the heart of our government. The deaths of three people over a two week period in February also highlights the failure of current policy to deal with increased homelessness.

UNISON is supporting our allies such as PPR in calling on parties and candidates to support a time-bound, resourced strategy to tackle housing inequality. We are also calling for parties and candidates to prioritise investment in affordable social housing and to ensure that policy and service provision addresses the needs of the growing number of homeless in our society

Environmental rights: We support ICTU proposals for investment in the green economy. Unfortunately, political dysfunction has halted a range of exciting

Non-devolved matters

In our UNISON General Election Manifesto 2015 we called on political parties in NI to make firm commitments on a range of important issues.

While these are not matters strictly for the NI Assembly at the forthcoming elections, we nevertheless highlight key areas which impact on the People.

projects and in their place attention has turned to the issue of fracking and drilling. We fully support our members in Fermanagh in opposition to fracking in Belcoo. Drilling proposals have now extended to Belfast and County Antrim and we support the Stop the Drill Campaign which is calling on the NI Executive for an independent Environmental Impact Assessment.

What steps will you and your Party take:

- ✓ To ensure that comprehensive strategies (with real action plans) are developed to tackle discrimination and promote equality?
- ✓ To ensure the implementation of an effective strategy to tackle poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation on the basis of objective need?
- ✓ To support a woman's right to choose and to support the 'Trust Women' campaign which is calling on our MLA's to trust women to make decisions about their own lives, to press for legal change to allow greater abortion access, and to push for a free vote on any progressive change?
- ✓ To support and implement the demands in the Women's Manifesto on domestic violence?
- ✓ To support the campaign for marriage equality?
- ✓ To support a time-bound, resourced strategy to tackle housing inequality; to support and implement policies for increased investment in affordable social housing; and to support and implement policies to tackle the homeless crisis?
- ✓ To oppose fracking and drilling proposals; and to support Planning Guidance to Councils which (i) identifies the environmental evidence for the damage fracking, drilling and related technologies create; (ii) requires Councils to conduct the widest possible consultation, and (iii) requires the full relevant consideration by Councils of such consultation outcomes for any fracking and drilling-related planning application?

We call on your party to commit to:

- Strong opposition to the attack on workers' rights in GB through the Trade Union Bill.
- Strong opposition to trade agreements such as TTIP and CETA which damage democracy, the economy, and workers' rights in NI.
- Support for the UK to remain in Europe to protect jobs and workers' rights, the economy and the commitments in our Peace Agreement