



UNISON NI Regional Council meets to agree future strategy for 2022

UNISON NI Regional Council met on Friday 22nd October to reflect on our achievements over the past year, debate future strategy, and elect the incoming Regional Committee for 2021-2023. Delegates from across NI agreed Resolutions that cover some of the key issues currently facing UNISON including:

- our manifesto for challenging governments on the UNISON agenda,
- investing in, and protecting, our health, education, community & voluntary services,
- climate change,
- equality and human rights,
- tackling poverty - including child poverty.

Chaired by Joint Regional Convenors Gabrielle Carton and James Large, delegates from across NI received a keynote address from UNISON General Secretary Christina McAnea. Christina recognised the major challenges our members



UNISON General Secretary Christina McAnea addresses NI Regional Council 2021

continue to face in the workplace and with employers during the pandemic. She further paid tribute to members and activists in Northern Ireland for the major contributions they continue to make to our union's agenda, both domestic and international; and for their constant vigilance on the peace process and the threats posed to it by political instability and the impact of Brexit. UNISON NI Regional Secretary Patricia McKeown updated delegates on the key policy and organisational issues facing the union.

Regional Committee reaffirms what UNISON stands for - democracy, collective action, solidarity, equality, human rights and inclusion

Regional Council Resolution 1 states,

'As division in our society deepens, much of the intolerance warned of in previous Regional Council resolutions, has become reality. Now, more than ever, we need to reaffirm the principles upon which our union is built.

'Our union has increasingly come under attack by politicians and others opposed to our democratic principles and core policies on democracy, equality and human rights. It is a function of UNISON to seek to influence political parties to adopt our agenda and not the other way around. We reaffirm the decision Council took at the outset of UNISON that we would not affiliate to any political party, nor will we permit any party to use our union to its own ends. Council further pledges to support any member or activist who may come under pressure for standing up for UNISON's principles and core values'.

Moving the motion Regional Convenor Gabrielle Carton said, "I am dedicated to UNISON because of what we stand for – democracy,

collective action, solidarity, equality, human rights and inclusion.

"I am proud of the fact that members and activists put the union first, above their own personal and political allegiances. I am proud of the fact that from the very start of UNISON, this Regional Council took the decision that we would not affiliate to, or align with, any political party, and that includes the Labour Party.

"Over the years we have had elected politicians, who have also been UNISON activists. They have understood that this union cannot, and will not, be used by any party in its own interests. It now appears that we have those in our ranks who do want to use this union, and we will stand against them" *(Continued on Page 2, Column 1)*



Regional Committee reaffirms what UNISON stands for

(Continued from Page 1, Column 2) “UNISON members are unionists, nationalists, republicans, loyalists, socialists, communists, social democrats and people with no political allegiance at all. We have made space for them all and will not tolerate any party or faction attempting to stack our branch committees or use our resources for their own political gain. All of us, and those who have gone before us, have

built a proud union in the face of conflict and political division outside. We cannot tolerate it coming inside our union. Our members have much bigger fights to fight.

Delegates, we represent the rainbow coalition of UNISON members. Our job is to make all political parties listen to us – not the other way around.

I am calling on Council to support this motion, to reaffirm what we stand for and to take action to protect the values, beliefs and principles of this union”.

Our manifesto for change – Regional Council Resolutions

Regional Council Resolutions support action and campaigns in some of the key issues currently facing UNISON. They include:

- support to all branches for the development of democratic structures and enhanced bargaining activity with the clear purpose of **advancing our members’ rights** (R2),
- support for members to access **immigration advice** through UNISON Legal Services (R3),
- maximising **facility time** from employers to ensure activists can carry out union duties and undergo relevant training(R4),
- ending **privatisation of nursing staff** (R5),
- incorporating **contractual sick pay** into all contracts of employment across the outsourced, privatised, community and voluntary sectors (R6),
- agreeing UNISON’s core demands as part of our **political campaigning** leading into the 2022 NI Assembly election and the period that follows (R7),
- supporting **climate justice** and action around COP 26 (R8),
- opposition to **mining** in the Sperrins and Gorteen Glens in Tyrone (R9),
- opposition to **gold mining** in the Sperrin Mountains and Inishowen peninsula (R10),
- intensifying our efforts to make **free school meals for all** a reality (R11,)
- prioritising **staff health and wellbeing** during and post COVID (R12),
- Prioritising **mental health in the workplace** as a trade union issue (R13),
- supporting the **relaunch of the Feminist Recovery Plan** and lobbying the NI Executive to develop an effective strategy

that will address these inequalities and ensure that it does not fall on the backs of women (R14),

- supporting the **rights of older people to treatment during the pandemic** (R15),
- seeking **pension justice** for ‘WASPI’ Women (R16),
- designating Galway House and NW Resource Centre as **Apartheid Free Zones** in solidarity with the Palestinian people (R17).

Regional Council registers vote of no confidence in UNISON NEC

Regional Council also debated, and carried, 3 emergency motions expressing a vote of no confidence in recent decisions by the NEC to change UNISON rules without National Delegate Conference approval as set out in the rule book.

The motions also registered strong support for our General Secretary Christina McAnea.

As Resolutions, they have been passed to the NEC and we have received a communication from the union’s Presidential Team advising that there are 3 legal opinions on the matter and that positive discussions are now taking place with the General Secretary and the Presidential Team.

We are advised that once these are concluded a further statement is to be issued.



Vote YES for strike action on NJC pay!

We are asking members working in schools and on NJC terms and conditions to vote YES for strike action in the current pay ballot.

If this applies to you, you will already have received important voting papers through the post in early December.

Every member must post their ballot back by **10th February 2022**.



Have your say on HSC Pay!

Members working in health and social care will have received an email link or a postal form to take part in UNISON NI's consultation on HSC pay. We need a strong mandate from you to challenge - using legal industrial action when required - not only on your pay but also on safe staffing and the crippling overspend on the use of agencies to plug holes in the health staff workforce. The consultation ends on **14th January 2022**.

UNISON College – Activist and Member Learning Programme

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

We offer over 180 workshops for all members across 90 topics such as autism, health & safety, palliative care, resilience, bereavement, communicating effectively, interview skills, drugs and alcohol, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, suicide awareness, dealing with challenging behaviour and Makaton.

All of our courses are now hosted at www.unisoncollegeni.org.uk. If you open the page on your phone, you can save it onto your own homepage as an app style icon. Just set up an account and, once approved, you can book, track and cancel courses from the convenience of your phone, tablet or computer. Our courses are currently taking place online.

To access these, all you need is a tablet/smart phone or a PC. Alternatively, you can view all our courses here <https://bit.ly/3yxdVne> and access our pre-recorded lectures.



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

UNISON Welfare support – There For You

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

For more general benefit advice during the crisis, see the dedicated COVID-19 Community Helpline: Freephone 0808 802 0020 / covid19@adviceni.net



Access UNISON support

- If you need support on specific issues in your workplace, please contact your branch rep. All contact details are listed on the branch pages of the website – www.unison-ni.org.uk/branches.co.uk
- For general queries you can contact UNISON Direct on 08001712193.
- You can also email us at [UnisonNorthernIreland @unison.co.uk](mailto:UnisonNorthernIreland@unison.co.uk)

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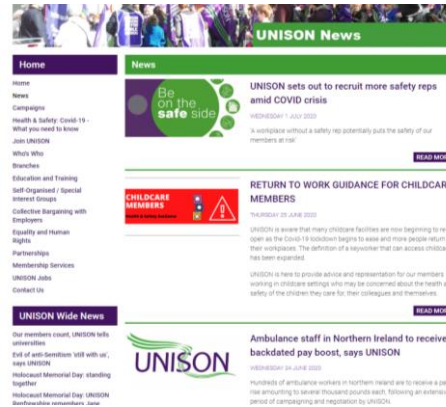
Check out www.unison-ni.org.uk/ to read more about what UNISON is doing for our members at work and in the community. You can also access our social media pages for regular updates including online courses, members meetings and advice. We have been running film nights; webinars; some branches run a weekly quiz... so stay connected and stay in touch!



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

Each of our 1.4 million members has their own reasons for joining UNISON. But everyone receives our help and support – with membership costing less than you might think. If you know someone who isn't a member yet, then pass on this newsletter and talk to them about the benefits of joining UNISON now. You could both also win £100 by entering the recruitment draw below.

- **Support** - we'll be with you when you need it most
- **Legal Help** for you at work and your family at home
- **Financial Assistance** and debt advice in times of need

- **Compensation** for you & your family
- **Discounts** including money off cars and holidays
- **Helpline** - Our helpline is open until midnight weekdays, and 4pm on Saturdays, closed on Sundays
- **Training** to help develop your career

Three simple ways to join UNISON today:



Join online at
joinunison.org



Call us on
0800 171 2193



Ask your
UNISON rep for an
application form

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

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

The competition will run until **31 January 2022**. To enter the competition, new members must either:

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