

## Who's Who on the Regional Committee in 2017/2018

The following is a list of Regional Committee members and a record of attendance for the quarterly meetings during 2018.

### Joint Regional Convenors

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

### Committee Members

Flora Alfante	Senior Care Assistant, Rosemount Care Centre	2
Paul Allen	Security Team Leader, Jordanstown University	1
Anecita Tomada	Registered Nurse, Four Seasons	0
Fiona Barton	Special Needs Classroom Assistant, Towerview PS, Bangor	4
Roisin Byrne	PCSS Domestic Royal Hospitals, Belfast	3
Caroline Campbell	Domestic Assistant, Causeway Hospital	4
Sarah Campbell*	Classroom Assistant (Special Needs), Holy Cross Boys	2
Henry Flanagan-Kane	Canteen staff, St Malachys College, Belfast	2
Irene Graham	Nursery Assistant, Oldpark Nursery School, Belfast	2
Sonia Graham	Resource Care Assistant, Ardview House	1
Ashley Green	Healthcare Assistant, Mater Hospital Belfast	4
Stephanie Greenwood	Higher Clerical Officer, Antrim Area Hospital	4
Carol Hall	Support Services, Bluestone Unit, Craigavon Hospital	4
Kim Hall	Domestic Assistant, Causeway Hospital	4
Daphne Harper	Cleaner/Supervisor, Craigavon Senior High School	1
Kevin Hillick	Caretaker, Poleglass Youth Club, Belfast	2
Fiona Kelly	Homecare Worker, Community Services, Magherafelt	1
Toni Kelly	Library Assistant, Brownlow Library, Craigavon	0
James Large	Pharmacy Technician, Ulster Hospital, Belfast	2
Joseph Lynch	Day Care Worker, Everton Centre, Belfast	3
Roberta Magee	Homecare Co-ordinator, Belfast Trust	3
Karen McCallum	Nursing Auxiliary, Lurgan Hospital	3
Niall McCarroll	Deputy Manager, First Housing, Derry	2
Conor McCarthy	Radiographers Helpers, Royal Hospitals, Belfast	4
Caroline McDaid	Classroom Assistant, Knockavoe School, Derry	2
Anna McGonigle	Retired Members Forum	3
Maura McKenna	Staff Side Officer	4
Kenny McManus	Building Supervisor, Fleming Fulton Special School, Belfast	2
Alan Philson	Nursing Assistant, Waterside Hospital, Derry	4
Samantha Rutherford	Community Care Worker, SEHSCT, Newtownards	0
Nicholas Shaw	Senior Support Worker, Braid Valley Hospital, Ballymena	3
Amanda Sweetlove	Emergency Medical Technician, Antrim Ambulance Station	3
Geraldine Thompson**	Care Assistant, Ratheane PNH, Coleraine	1
Jill Weir	Ward Clerk, South West Acute Hospital, Enniskillen	3
Deborah Yapicioz	Social Worker, St Luke's site, Armagh	3

### NEC Members in Attendance

Margaret McKee***	Catering Assistant, Royal Hospitals, Belfast	1
Lucia McKeever	Community Ambassador, Meningitis Trust	1
Alastair Long	Ambulance Personnel, Larne Ambulance Depot	3

\*Sarah Campbell resigned due to ill health in Aug 2018

\*\*Geraldine Thompson joined the Committee in July 2018 (Young Members Group)

\*\*\*Margaret McKee ended her term as President in June 2018

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# Introduction

At our 2018 Regional Council we mark UNISON's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. To celebrate we have compiled a pamphlet recording many of our 'milestone' challenges and achievements which will be presented at the Council on 26 October. We are encouraging our branches and lay structures to do the same. Learning from our history informs our current challenges. It also honours the extraordinary effort of thousands of UNISON members over the past 25 years.

There is a story of local champions, risk takers and peace makers that should be recorded for the enormous contribution they have made to labour history. It is a story best recaptured by our branches and for this reason Regional Committee is encouraging them to apply to Regional Pool to help fund projects that recapture their proud history.

As Regional Committee and our other democratic structures have developed, UNISON has made space for our changing membership. We are now more than 40000 strong and in growth. We are the largest union in NI for women workers and for black and migrant workers. However the world of work, and life in general, for our members has changed radically. Many face precarious work. Many hold down more than one job to make ends meet. Demands on their time is a constant pressure. Regional Committee believes that the time has come for more evolution in our structures and our democratic processes.

Our Annual Report tracks key developments in the work of Regional Committee, lay structures and our branches all working in partnership with our staff team.

It is a major 2018 milestone that more new members are joining UNISON than in any year since our foundation. This is a tribute to the work of everyone involved and is proof, if we needed it, that UNISON is totally relevant to workers today.



This report tracks achievements and challenges in union organising, the participation of our members, bargaining, campaigning and in our public policy agenda.

We continue to operate in a political vacuum. We have no functioning Government and the likelihood of an early return of the Assembly is still in doubt. We are facing deep uncertainty on jobs, services, equality and rights for our members, and the Peace Process in general as we move relentlessly to an exit from the EU that does not have the consent of our members nor of the People of NI. Both issues have dominated much of our public policy agenda for the past two years.

Despite this instability, we have made many achievements throughout 2018. They are recorded in some detail in this report and will be debated at our forthcoming Council. Regional Committee takes this opportunity to pay tribute to the hard work and dedication of our members, activists and staff throughout 2018, and we look forward to working together to advance our union agenda in the year to come.

*Patricia McKeown*  
**Regional Secretary**

*Denis Keatings*  
**Joint Regional Convener**

*Gabrielle Carton*  
**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 last annual meeting of the Council in October 2017.



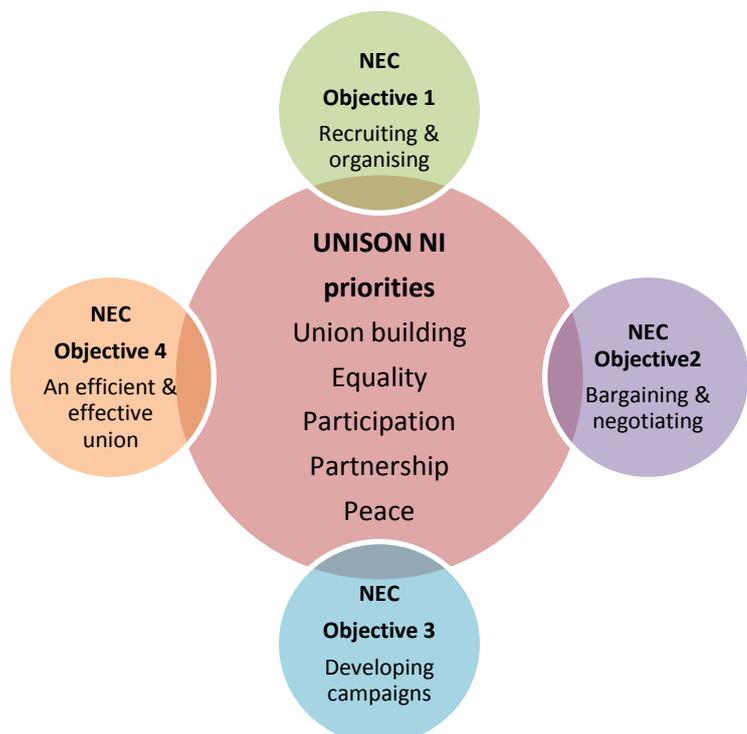
May Day 2018

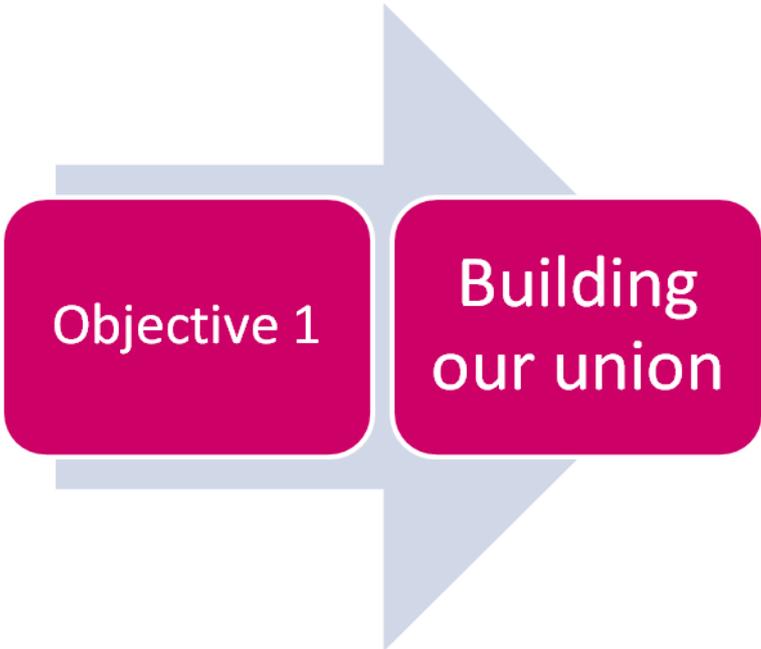
The Regional Committee takes this opportunity to thank all UNISON members, activists and staff for their role in making the past year such a success.

## The UNISON NI Plan 2018

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, 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.





Recruiting, organising, representing & retaining members

# Recruiting and organising

## Our recruitment and retention achievements in 2017/18

This section reports on our significant recruitment achievements to the end of 2017 and during 2018. Despite the serious impact of the continuing absence of Government, budget cuts and austerity on jobs in both the public and private sectors:

- ✓ we have achieved more milestones as we continue to exceed our recruitment targets at an unprecedented rate, with **6100** members recruited during 2017 and **5358** members already recruited to date during 2018;
- ✓ we are in a period of sustained membership growth – this is reflected across branches, sectors and targeted occupational groups;
- ✓ the Fighting Fund Initiative continues to exceed its recruitment targets;
- ✓ stewards and members continue to build the union through direct recruitment;
- ✓ we are one of the largest organisations of women on the island with over 34,000 (83%) women members;
- ✓ we are the largest organisation of black and migrant workers in NI;
- ✓ our membership is getting younger as the number of workers under 26 years grows each year.

Our regular analysis of leavers has shown that 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.

**Regional Committee Organising and Recruitment Strategy:** The Regional Committee's agreed strategy is to prioritise continued growth and increase union density across all our areas of organisation in support of our sustained campaigns on pay, equality, decent work and public sector investment.

Within this strategy there are a number of specific objectives:

1. the effective management and co-ordination of the **Fighting Fund Initiative**;
2. the development of **special initiatives** across key sectors, including the private sector homecare project and migrant workers/nursing home project;
3. the prioritisation of **infill recruitment** in response to the vast majority of our leavers coming from key occupational groups within health and education – our largest sectors of membership; and
4. the development and implementation by branches and the organising team of **detailed recruitment and organising plans linked to branch and regional campaigns.**



The following campaigns undertaken during 2018 are real examples of how encouraging member involvement around workplace issues can secure membership increase. They include:

- Challenging privatisation in health and education - in particular the ever increasing drive to privatise medicine and our homecare services.
- Pay campaigns in health and education including the challenge of closing the pay deficit and the pay cap and protection for all workers affected by the cuts.
- Our demand for a real living wage across all sectors.

- Challenging cuts to government funding to the community & voluntary sector.
- Bargaining for recognition agreements, particularly in the private homecare and private nursing home sectors.
- Our campaign across the public service, pressing employers to Equality Impact Assess proposals which can result in unsafe staffing levels; casualised employment; zero hours contracts; unpaid work; discrimination against women, particularly on key health issues; and lack of recognition of the impact of childcare and other caring responsibilities.
- Education and health sector specific campaigns as set out in Section 2 on Bargaining, particularly those that affect women's work, children's rights and patients' rights. These campaigns have encouraged more workers to join UNISON and have expanded our role on community activism.



**RMS** – Our RMS team play a vital role in our organising and recruitment plan. It continues to maintain centralised processing and databases in partnership with all branches, and plays a key role in mapping for joint branch assessments.

**Recruitment campaigns** - To support our Autumn/Winter campaign, and the union-wide 'Grovember' initiative, all branches and the full staff team have signed up to play their part. Our aim is to repeat last year's success and achieve an additional 20% on top of our annual target.



## ■ Our recruitment achievements in 2017/2018

2017 was a tremendously successful year for overall recruitment and growth in our region. Table 2 shows that our final 2017 total was **6100** new recruits – a 44% increase over the previous year. We also ended the year in growth by 2%, with a membership increase of almost 1000 over the year. 18 branches met their yearly target, with 90% increasing their recruitment compared to 2016

Figure 1 shows that the Fighting Fund Initiative was a huge success with nine local organisers recruiting 2545 new members – 13% above the Initiative target of 2250 and 42% of total recruitment over the year.

It is clear from Table 1 that branches participating in the Initiative had a significant increase in their membership, and experienced a turnaround on the ratio between new recruits and leavers compared

to 2016. The initiative also helped to reinvigorate additional direct activist recruitment with 3555 new members recruited by branches in addition to those recruited by individual FFOs. This demonstrates what can be achieved with co-ordinated effort between the branch and staff teams.

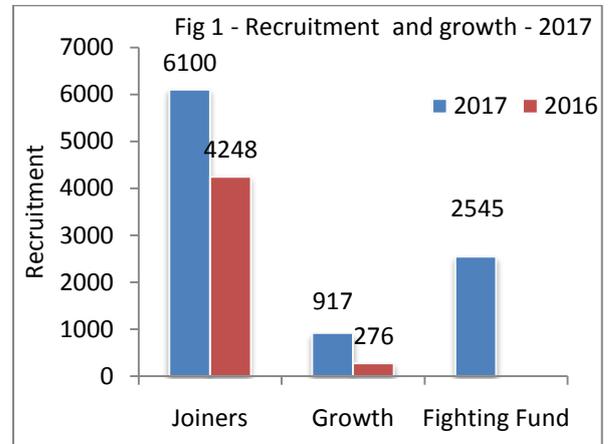


Table 1– UNISON NI recruitment by branch, 1 Jan 2017 to 31 Dec 2017

Branch	2017 Recruitment					Comparison with 2016	
	Target	Actual	Jan to Sept	Oct to Dec	% target met	2016 Total	% increase in 2017 compared to 2016
Sperrin Devenish*	80	185	169	16	231%	76	143%
Craigavon Unison*	140	317	243	74	226%	195	63%
N & W Belfast Health*	162	333	301	32	206%	155	115%
Orchard*	160	328	261	67	205%	176	86%
NEELB*	150	300	259	41	200%	159	89%
Community & Voluntary*	200	395	327	68	198%	298	33%
Belfast Education*	150	280	215	65	187%	198	41%
UCHT*	300	502	406	96	167%	247	103%
South & East**	200	253	198	55	127%	213	19%
Southern Ed*	100	119	98	21	119%	52	129%
Derry Education	150	177	145	32	118%	113	57%
Northern Health*	600	700	556	144	117%	519	35%
Mater Hospital Trust*	100	112	87	25	112%	85	32%
Newry & Mourne*	200	220	170	50	110%	114	93%
Muckamore Abbey*	50	55	48	7	110%	23	139%
Down Lisburn**	300	328	245	83	109%	237	38%
Down Education*	150	160	127	33	107%	123	30%
Causeway**	170	176	115	61	104%	173	2%
Royal*	413	407	352	55	99%	448	-9%
Foyle**	300	291	215	76	97%	221	32%
Omagh & Fermanagh**	240	188	149	39	78%	145	30%
Greenpark	110	76	50	26	69%	69	10%
N I Blood Transfusion	12	6	5	1	50%	5	20%
Coleraine Magee Univ*	40	18	18	0	45%	5	260%
Jordanstown Univ*	50	19	15	4	38%	8	138%
Belfast City Hospital	313	109	77	32	35%	104	5%
N I Ambulance	85	28	24	4	33%	30	-7%
Health Agencies	50	15	12	3	30%	54	-72%
Rathgael	15	3	2	1	20%	3	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5000</b>	<b>6100</b>	<b>4889</b>	<b>1211</b>	<b>122%</b>	<b>4248</b>	<b>44%</b>

\* Fighting Fund Initiative 2017 \*\*Fighting Fund Homecare project only

## ■ Our recruitment achievements in 2018 to date

### 2018 - Overall recruitment achievements

From January 2018 to date, all the signs are that we will repeat, or even surpass, our 2017 achievements. Regional Committee has thrown its full weight behind the forthcoming 'Grovementer' initiative which involves the whole union.

Table 2 measures recruitment activity from January to end September 2018. We have current recruitment of **5358** new members to date and are already 7% ahead of our yearly target recruitment of 5000. This is an increase of 4% on those recruited during the same period last year and 94% more than those recruited during the same period in 2016. During 2018, we have net growth of 1173 new members, compared with net growth of 1017 during the same period in 2017.

Table 2 shows that 16 branches have already met their yearly targets in only 9 months, and that 22 branches are showing growth during 2018 to date. The picture over a 4 year period shows that 18 of our branches have achieved steady growth. All education branches have sustained 4 years of growth, ranging from 8% to 42%. In health, 10 branches now show sustained growth over a 4 year period ranging from 1% to 21%. In the community and voluntary sector, despite major funding problems, our membership has grown by 8% over the 4 year period. 5 of the branches still to achieve growth over the 4 year period were not in the main Fighting Fund initiative. Of those health branches attached only to the private homecare project, evidence shows that this slowed retraction.

Table 2 – UNISON NI recruitment by branch, 1 Jan to 30 Sept 2018

Branch	Annual target	Jan-Sept 2018	Jan-Sept 2017	Jan-Sept 2016	No required to reach 2018 Target	1 yr growth trend (No.)	4yr growth trend (%)
Northern Health*	600	<b>638</b>	583	326	Target Met	↑199	↑5%
UCHT*	300	<b>437</b>	437	157	Target Met	↑184	↑21%
Foyle**	300	<b>345</b>	239	139	Target Met	↑138	↓7%
Comm & Voluntary*	200	<b>287</b>	337	203	Target Met	↑44	↑8%
Down Lisburn**	300	<b>272</b>	273	156	28	↑35	↑1%
Belfast Education*	150	<b>265</b>	221	140	Target Met	↑67	↑13%
NEELB*	150	<b>265</b>	262	95	Target Met	↑125	↑37%
Royal*	413	<b>263</b>	364	297	150	↓23	↑12%
Orchard H&SC*	160	<b>261</b>	269	125	Target Met	↑12	↑3%
Craigavon Unison*	140	<b>260</b>	268	142	Target Met	↑42	↑10%
Derry Education*	150	<b>232</b>	147	80	Target Met	↑122	↑31%
South & East Belfast**	200	<b>231</b>	211	135	Target Met	↑38	↓2%
N & W Belfast*	162	<b>214</b>	307	98	Target Met	↑12	↑14%
Omagh & Fermanagh**	240	<b>177</b>	167	111	63	↑4	↓7%
Newry & Mourne*	200	<b>176</b>	191	82	24	↑31	0%
Causeway**	170	<b>170</b>	140	116	Target met	↑22	↓4%
Sperrin Devenish*	80	<b>142</b>	170	29	Target Met	↑55	↑42%
Belfast City Hospital*	313	<b>135</b>	78	56	178	↓6	↓6%
Down Education*	150	<b>124</b>	133	66	26	↑28	↑13%
Mater*	100	<b>117</b>	96	47	Target Met	↑18	↑3%
Southern Education*	100	<b>113</b>	98	36	Target Met	↑34	↑8%
Greenpark*	110	<b>77</b>	50	46	33	↑14	↑10%
Health Agencies*	50	<b>52</b>	12	41	Target Met	↓7	↓15%
Muckamore Abbey*	50	<b>46</b>	48	8	4	↑14	↑19%
N I Ambulance	85	<b>21</b>	24	23	64	↓26	↓10%
UU Jordanstown*	50	<b>20</b>	15	2	30	↓1	↑64%
UU Coleraine*	40	<b>14</b>	18	3	26	↓1	↓5%
N I Blood Transfusion*	12	<b>3</b>	5	3	9	↑3	↓2%
Rathgael*	15	<b>1</b>	2	3	14	↓4	↓50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5000</b>	<b>5358</b>	<b>5165</b>	<b>2767</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>1173</b>	<b>↑7%</b>
<b>Growth</b>		<b>↑1173</b>	<b>↑1017</b>	<b>↓373</b>			

\* Fighting Fund Initiative 2018

\*\*Fighting Fund Homecare project

Fig 2: 0-500 members

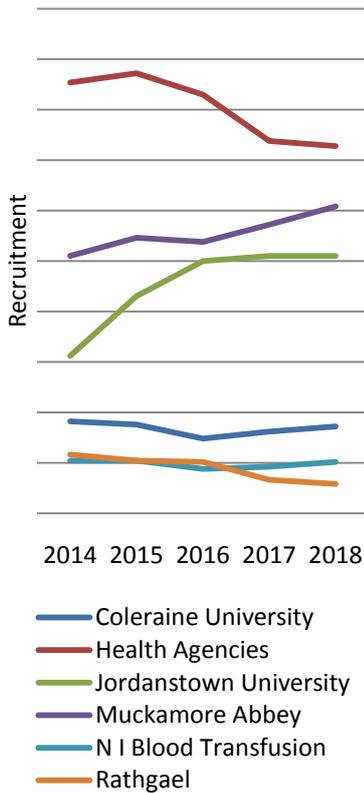


Fig 3: 501-1000 members

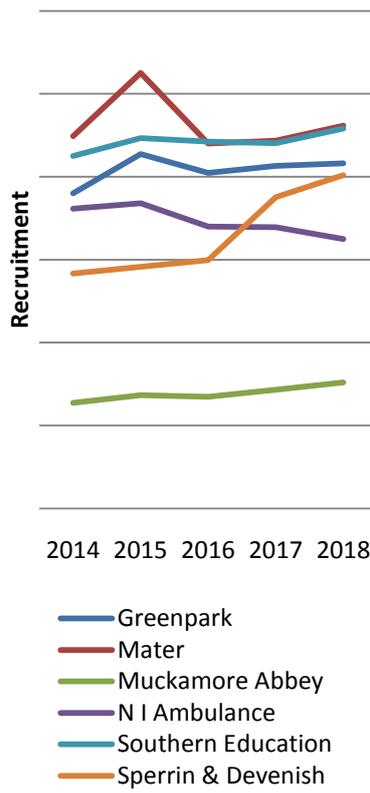


Fig 4: 1001-1600 members

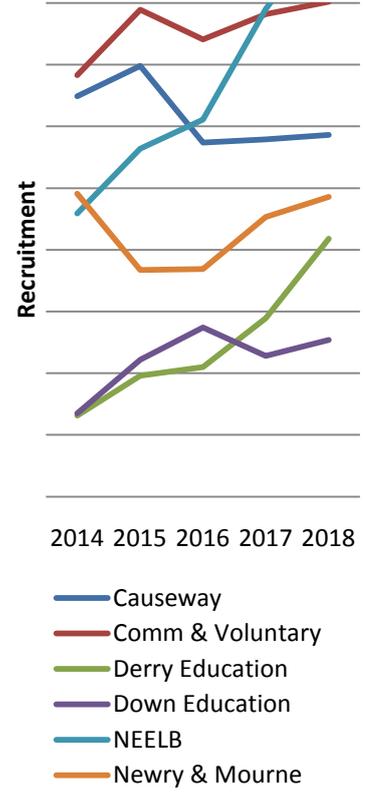


Fig 5: 1601 - 2000 members

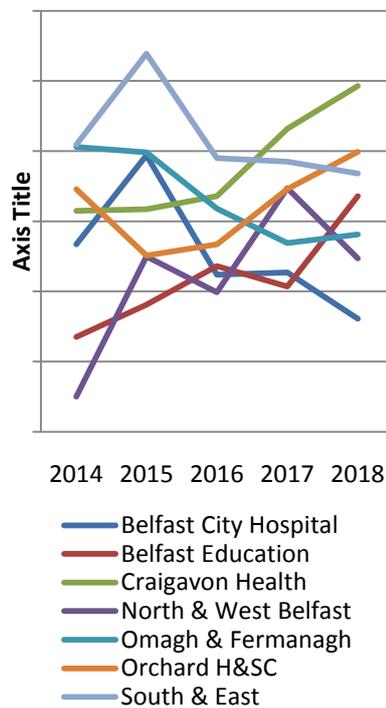
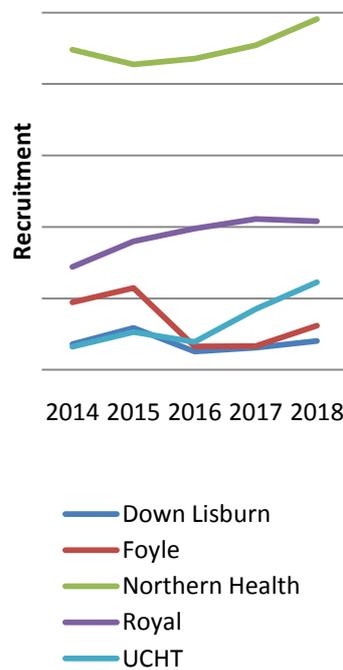


Fig 6: 2000 members or more



The charts on this page show recruitment trends across branches from 2014 to 2018. Patterns of growth or retraction over this period are also identified in the final column of Table 2 on the previous page.

## 2018 - Recruitment achievements across key sectors and groups

Table 3 shows that the 2018 Fighting Fund projects and additional branch-based recruitment initiatives, has resulted in increased recruitment across health and social services and education 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 health and an education service still facing the upheaval created by the formation of the Education Authority.

Community and voluntary sector recruitment is being maintained at a high level 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 Private Homecare initiative has had a positive impact, but poor terms and conditions, particularly in homecare, continue to produce a higher than average attrition rate.

It is very positive that we continue to grow the proportion of young people joining UNISON with 1215 new members in the year to date. Our challenge now is to grow the next generation of union leaders.

Table 3 - UNISON NI total recruitment by sector, 1 Jan to 30 Sept 2018

Recruitment figures by sector	Jan-Sept 2018	Jan-Sept 2017	Total for 2017
Health and social services (excluding private sector)	2412	2313	2738
Higher education	14	15	66
Education and other NJC	1052	977	1159
Community & Voluntary	344	407	469
Private sector*	1536	1453	1668
(Young members 26 and under)	(1215)	(1126)	(1274)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5358</b>	<b>5165</b>	<b>6100</b>

\*including private homecare, contractors and PNHs

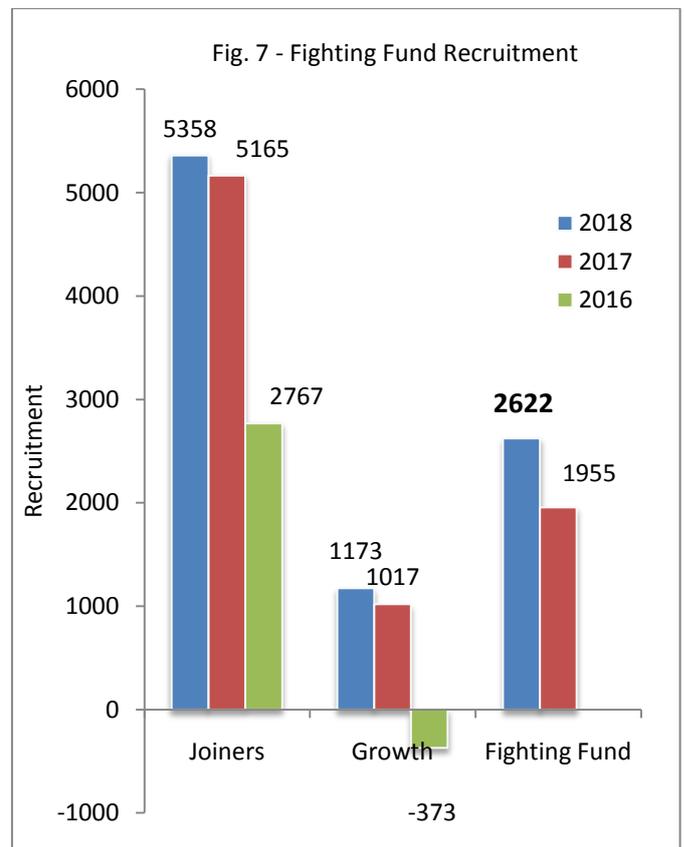
## 2018– The success of the Fighting Fund Initiative

This has been the most successful year for Fighting Fund projects to date. In September 2017, 23 branches successfully secured funding for 10 projects which enabled 11 Fighting Fund Organiser posts to be created for the 12 month duration of the projects.

Commencing in January 2018, the majority are multi-branch projects covering health, education, the community and voluntary sector, and our 2 University branches which have a combination of in-house and private sector membership.

**Outcomes - recruitment:** Figure 1 shows that:

- Fighting Fund Local Organisers have recruited **2622** new members to date across the participating branches. This is already 95% of the overall initiative target of 2750 new members and 34% more than was recruited by the Fighting Fund Initiative at this time last year.



- recruitment by FFOs comprises 49% of the total number new members recruited by UNISON NI over the year.
- The initiative has also continued to have a positive impact on wider activist recruitment with branches recruiting an additional 2736 new members over and above those directly recruited by FFOs during the period.

From Table 4 we can see that between 8<sup>th</sup> January and 8<sup>th</sup> October branches increased their recruitment by a total of 7%, compared to the same period in 2017, and a very significant 94% compared to the same period in 2016 when no Fighting Fund Organisers were in place. It is clear that, in general terms, there is a correlation between the quantum of Fighting Fund resources allocated to a branch and subsequent recruitment success. ***It should be noted that for some branches a dip in 2018, compared to previous years, is explained by outstanding recruitment achievement (well above target) in those years.***

**Outcomes - Building the activist base:** The presence of Fighting Fund Organisers continues to assist in building both the activist base and member participation. FFOs have been involved in identifying new leaders and their recruitment activity is designed to enable Area Organisers to devote additional time to building the steward base and encouraging greater membership participation in the life of the union

**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 regional organisers is designed to improve the union's response to issues affecting the members.

Table 4: % year on year increase in branch recruitment and impact of Fighting Fund

Branch	2018 recruitment		Increase in recruitment compared to previous years	
	Total	Fight Fund	2017	2016
BCH*	135	44	↑75%	↑141%
Belfast Education*	265	129	↑22%	↑89%
Causeway**	170	53	↑30%	↑47%
Comm & Vol*	287	74	↓13%	↑41%
Craigavon Hosp*	260	44	↑2%	↑83%
Derry Education*	232	194	↑60%	↑190%
Down Education*	124	34	↓4%	↑88%
Down Lisburn**	272	96	↑9%	↑74%
Foyle**	345	195	↑47%	↑148%
Greenpark*	77	33	↑54%	↑60%
Health Agencies*	52	15	↑333%	↑27%
Mater*	117	65	↑32%	↑149%
Muckamore*	46	17	↓4%	↑475%
N & W Belfast*	214	110	↓29%	↑118%
N I Ambulance	21	5	↓13%	↓9%
NIBTS*	3	1	/	/
NEELB*	265	162	↑2%	↑179%
Newry & Mourne*	176	92	↓5%	↑115%
Northern Health*	638	397	↑15%	↑96%
Omagh & Ferm**	177	55	↑8%	↑59%
Orchard H&SC*	261	107	0%	↑109%
Rathgael*	1	0	/	/
Royal*	263	176	↓27%	↓11%
S&E Belfast**	231	96	↑14%	↑71%
Southern Ed*	113	42	↑15%	↑213%
Sperrin Devenish*	142	109	↓17%	↑390%
UCHT*	437	252	↑7%	↑178%
UU Coleraine*	14	11	↓22%	↑366%
UU Jordanstown*	20	14	33%	↑900%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5358</b>	<b>2622</b>	<b>↑7%</b>	<b>↑94%</b>

\* Fighting Fund Initiative - 2018

\*\*Fighting Fund Homecare project only - 2018



## 2018– The success of other special recruitment initiatives

We 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.

**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 our 10 branches with private homecare members. During 2017/18 the joint branch bid again secured the resources for a 12 month project. To date, 422 new members have been recruited during the duration of the current project and we now have a total of 1383 members in the sector across 51 companies.

**Migrant workers / nursing home project:** This project is a successful Regional Committee bid and is particularly important. Between 15,000 to 20,000 staff work in hundreds of nursing and residential homes with the vast majority in the private sector. Major employers include Four Seasons, Runwood, Brooklands and Priory. Whilst UNISON is the largest union organising in the sector, the potential for recruitment is huge, particularly amongst migrant workers who make up an increasing proportion of staff in these homes and UNISON membership.

Recruiting and organising the migrant workforce is a UNISON priority, particularly in the context of concerns about care standards, employment standards, and our imminent exit from the EU. Both EU nationals and other migrant workers are facing major employment issues associated with their

employment status, immigration policies, racism and discrimination. There has been an 87% rise in race hate crimes over the past four years. To date 500 new members have been recruited in private nursing homes during the duration of the current project and we now have a total of 2563 members in the sector, across 140 companies. Regional and branch recruitment activity in this sector will be prioritised during November 2018



**Self-organised group recruitment:** Our self organised groups continue to support branches through direct recruitment linked to equality campaigns; 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 2018 include:

- Women's Committee direct action on the pay frequency and living wage campaigns, through the WASPI campaign and through bargaining demands on menopause and other women's health issues;
- our LGBT group, in conjunction with local branches, have run recruitment initiatives at Pride and other events in Belfast, Newry and Derry;
- our BME members and migrant workers have organised a series of support and recruitment events;
- our Young Members' Forum has prioritised the zero hours campaign;
- our Disability Group has kick started recruitment with a major mental health at work conference; and
- our Retired Members' Forum continues to support direct branch recruitment and regional initiatives.

# Building branch and workplace organisation

## ■ Branch Development

**Regional organising awards:** The 2018 Organising Awards took place in March at Belfast Castle. At the event we premiered a film and launched a report celebrating the nominees and the extraordinary volume of work and achievements of our branches and activists during the previous year.



17 branches and 1 self-organised group submitted a total of 33 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' from Margaret McKee, President.

## Organising & Recruitment awards

*This award focuses on sustainable recruitment which means recruiting new members using the organising approach; identifying and recruiting potential activists and stewards; and demonstrating how branches support them.*

- **Gold award - Northern Health:** The branch worked in partnership with the Trust to run recruitment days for nurses. This has secured more staff for the service and has led to increased recruitment into UNISON.
- **Silver award - Craigavon Health:** The branch achieved significant recruitment success by mobilising low paid workers to challenge the imposition of the new regional uniform for support workers.



## Membership participation awards

*This award seeks to recognise the work of branches in developing collective organisation, as well as recognising branches who are encouraging members to stand for election as local stewards and are supporting them in the roles they undertake.*

- **Gold award -North & West Belfast Community:** The branch encouraged members in private nursing homes to participate in NISCC training to raise awareness of their obligations and to improve care standards.
- **Silver award- Northern Health:** The branch collected 22,000 signatures from members, their families and communities to protest about proposed cuts to Trust services.



## Negotiation and representation awards

*During 2017, cuts and the unresolved budget crisis continued to create huge challenges for us across health, social services, education and the community and voluntary sector. All this and more led branches to develop new ways to challenge the dominant issues of increasing casualisation; the use of zero hours contracts, and staff reductions across all service. This award highlighted some of the excellent negotiating and representation strategies developed by branches during 2017.*

- **Gold award - Royal Hospitals:** Negotiations ensured that the Royal Hospitals car park came back into public ownership after 20 years in the private sector. All car park staff were TUPEd over to the Trust and all staff were recruited into UNISON.
- **Silver award- South & East Belfast & North & West Belfast:** The branches worked in partnership with the Belfast HSC Trust to develop a recovery plan for the in-house homecare service.
- **Highly Commended award – Ulster Community & Hospitals:** Negotiations in a residential care home ensured safe and healthy working conditions for those working in laundry facilities.



## Campaigning awards

*Campaigning is a vital part of our work. In the current climate, where a massive attack is being launched on public services and equality and human rights, this award looks at branch based campaigns across the UNISON agenda which might seek to build local alliances, work on international solidarity issues or lobby those in power to advance the position of our members, their families and communities.*

- **Gold award- Newry & Mourne:** Following indication by the Southern Health & Social Care Trust of the possible closure of Daisy Hill Hospital A&E, the branch campaigned against any closure or reduction of 24/7 services.
- **Silver award - Northern Health:** The “Bee Kind” campaign aimed to change a perceived culture of bullying and harassment through joint work with the Trust, and the design of promotional materials to promote positive behaviours, good communications, core values and culture change.
- **Highly Commended award- Mater Hospitals:** This initiative with the Belfast HSC Trust was aimed at helping address the high suicide rate in North Belfast by reducing the number of people with mental health issues leaving the Mater A&E before they were properly assessed.

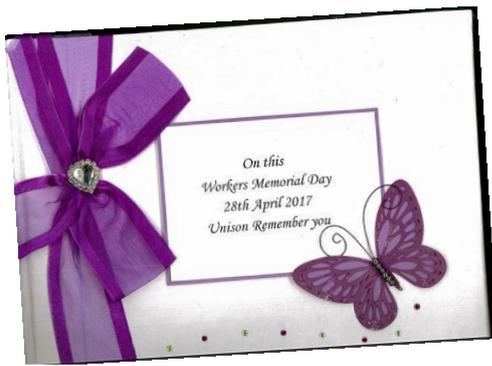


## Communicating awards

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*This category covers branch initiatives which used communications plans to support and develop their branch organising and recruitment work. During 2017 the use of social media and websites by members, branches and our self-organised groups again increased and most are linked in with the UNISON NI Facebook and website.*

**Gold award - Northern Health:** This communications initiative was an attempt to engage directly with members outside the social media environment.



**Silver award - Royal Hospitals:** This strategy sought to improve membership participation and communications through the use of social media and the branch website.

## Outstanding new steward awards

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*We all know that our stewards are the heart and lifeblood of the union. This award was for the new activists elected during 2017 who have made a real difference to the work of their branch. They have both shown leadership skills by taking the lead in campaigns, recruitment or motivating stewards and members.*

**Gold award -** Samantha Thompson, Derry Education

**Silver award -** Andrew Linton , NEELB

## Excellence awards

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*This award is made to the activist or member who has made a real difference to the lives of our members; has shown exceptional leadership; and has motivated members to participate. They will have gone the extra mile for our union, usually over many years of dedicated service.*

**Gold award -** Angela Boorman, Northern Health

**Silver award -** Debbie Coyle, Omagh and Fermanagh



**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 2017 Regional Council and the current Regional Committee strategy. Activities during 2018 have included:

- contacting all branches to highlight the beneficial role that it can play in supporting branch development;
- providing specific branches with support to recruit, rebuild the steward base;
- help with branch finance and to develop branch committees;
- ‘troubleshooting’ on behalf of the Regional Committee in specific branches facing difficulties;
- reviewing branch rules and AGMs to ensure they meet UNISON’s rules and the Code of Good Branch Practice;
- developing guidance on the recruitment of stewards and their rights;
- working with the Education Department to assess the 2 year mandatory training programme for all branch committee members which commenced at the start of the year;
- completing a review of the Organising Awards and successfully increasing branch participation;
- supporting branches to increase local self organisation.

**Branch development strategies:** In order to ensure that all our branches receive the necessary development support, our branch assessment, planning and budgeting activity continues to be 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 in 2016, 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. The new online tool was rolled out earlier this year and has been incorporated into the full-day assessment process.



Our organisers and RMS staff support branches by using our database to create up to date pictures of the members, structures and democratic participation in each branch. This enables branch committees 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;
- financial health and branch budget to implement the branch plan.

This work 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 goals.

In addition it supports branch committees to produce 'objective based' budgets based on the union's core objectives and the decisions taken at the Joint Branch Assessment.

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 continue to move in this direction.

**Branch Secretaries Forum:** The branch secretaries forum meets quarterly and has been operating successfully for nine years. During 2018, members have discussed branch and regional strategies for challenging cuts and have shared best practice recruitment initiatives. The agenda of the Forum is currently under review with a view to increasing branch participation.

**Regional Pool:** 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.

Following new NEC advice the Regional Pool was again open for bids from branches and from the region during 2018. Whilst one successful branch bid was agreed, the majority of applications did not meet the requisite criteria that bids must support *innovative* organising, recruitment and member participation activities that would not otherwise be funded from branch funds.

Regional Committee is now encouraging branches to also bid to the Pool to match the Milestones report showcased at our 2018 Regional Council. This is an important exercise in recapturing labour history and the struggles and achievements of our branches over the past 25 years.



We are awaiting further guidance from the Centre on the relationship between the Regional Pool and any further branch top-ups.

**General Political Fund:** The fund is now known as the Campaign Fund and a new application form has been developed. Branches and groups wishing to make applications are advised to contact the regional office for assistance.

Regional Committee was successful in a bid for a programme of political campaigning, including activities to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement; support for our work in protecting the Peace Process in the context of exiting the EU; engaging with political party conferences; and events to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the NHS.

A number of NI branches have made successful bids to the GPF in 2018. 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 such as 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.

Regional Committee also supports bids to the campaign fund from our allies such as the Equality Coalition, CAJ and PPR.



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

Table 5 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 and Team UNISON, where much information is exchanged; 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.



*Table 5 - Branch development indicators, 2017/18*

Branch	Paid release	Branch Assessment	Attended BS Forum /Team UNISON	Mapped	1 year Recruitment trend - 2018	New stewards from Oct 2017		Branch minutes on File
						Women	Men	
Belfast City Hospital	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↓	5	5	Yes
Belfast Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	3	0	Yes
Causeway	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	4	1	Yes
Health Agencies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↓	1	2	Yes
UU Coleraine	A&W	Yes	No	Yes	↓	0	0	Yes
Community & Vol	A&W	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	8	5	Yes
Craigavon Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	1	1	Yes
Derry Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	1	2	Yes
Down & Lisburn	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	4	1	Yes
Down Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	3	0	Yes
Foyle Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	1	1	Yes
Greenpark Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	2	3	Yes
UU Jordanstown	A&W	Yes	No	Yes	↓	0	0	Yes
Mater Hospital	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	3	2	Yes
Muckamore	Yes	Joint	Yes	Yes	↑	0	0	Yes
N & W Belfast Trust	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	0	0	Yes
NI Blood Transfusion	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	↑	0	0	Pending
NE Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	2	0	Yes
Newry & Mourne	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	0	0	Yes
NI Ambulance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↓	1	0	Yes
Northern Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	9	1	Yes
Omagh & Fermanagh	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	1	2	Yes
Orchard H&SC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	7	2	Yes
Rathgael	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↓	0	0	Yes
Royal Hospitals	Yes	Joint	Yes	Yes	↓	7	4	Yes
S & E Belfast	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	0	0	Yes
Southern Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	2	0	Yes
Sperrin & Devenish	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	1	0	Yes
UCHT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑	0	1	Yes

**Measuring organising success – Branch participation:** 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. In 2018 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, 2017/18

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 May Day Event / ICTU demos	Organised Branch public events/ demos
Belfast City Hosp	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Belfast Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Causeway	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Health Agencies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UU Coleraine	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Community & Vol	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Craigavon Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Derry Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Down & Lisburn	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Down Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Foyle Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Greenpark Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UU Jordanstown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Mater Hospital	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Muckamore	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N & W Belfast	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NIBTS	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
NE Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Newry & Mourne	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NI Ambulance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Northern Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Omagh & Ferm	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Orchard H&SC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rathgael	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Royal Hospitals	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
S & E Belfast	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Southern Educ	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sperrin Devenish	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UCHT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## ■ Membership participation and building the stewards base

**Annual General Meetings:** The majority of AGMs were completed by end March 2018, with a small number given leave by Regional Committee to extend their process to April to facilitate reaching quorum. Regional Committee also agreed that the Community & Voluntary sector branch AGMs would run in September and October to facilitate

ongoing branch reorganisation. All branch committees received training during 2017 on the correct format for presentation of their financial report to AGMs.

The Branch Development Group continues to review the conduct of AGMs to improve the democratic participation of members and

ensure core posts and positions on regional structures are filled. BDG recommendations are endorsed by Regional Committee and passed to branches and the organising team for implementation. Specific issues include:

- support to fill core posts;
- support to ensure quorums;
- recommendations on resourcing;
- aggregate meetings in accessible venues;
- improvements in AGM newsletters to empower and properly inform members;
- encouragement of branch level SOGs;
- monitoring to ensure annual stewards elections and measures to fill gaps.

**Direct member involvement:** Once again, thousands of our members have been directly involved in demonstrations, lobbies, challenging Board meetings in the public sector and lobbying political parties and local politicians. Members have also participated in UNISON surveys and directly in the ICTU Better Work, Better Lives campaign.

The use of social media by members, branch and self-organised groups has again increased. All branches now have their own 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.

Recognising that the increased use of social media has pros and cons, this year Regional Committee incorporated new training on UNISON social media protocols and the law to assist branches.

**Steward base:** During 2018, as part of the joint branch assessment process, organisers undertook a detailed audit of elected members in each branch in partnership with branch secretaries. Inactive reps were removed from the record and the process of holding new election is ongoing. Branches are citing a range of problems in convincing members to take up positions as stewards. We are a predominantly female union and Regional Committee is aware that we must make the position of steward attractive to women members, including providing the support they need to get the job done.

The “Get Elected” campaign is being re-run between October and December 2018, with each branch working to a programme with organising staff to encourage members to stand for election as local shop stewards. This re-launch will be kick-started at Regional Council and will be followed by a workshop with organisers.

*Table 7: Proportionality by activist post*

Activist Position	Total 2018	Women 2018	Men 2018	Women 2017	Men 2017
Branch Secretaries	42	69%	31%	58%	42%
Branch Chairs	37	62%	38%	67%	33%
Branch Treasurers	48	79%	21%	81%	19%
Other branch posts	70	52%	48%	63%	37%
Workplace stewards	553	65%	35%	68%	32%
Contacts	225	88%	12%	89%	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1039</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>29%</b>

## ■ Branch funding

Total income returned to Head Office increased to £4,004,863. This represents a 4.5% increase on the previous year.

Total income returned to branches for 2017 increased to £981,915. This represents a 6.5% increase on the previous year.

# Participation & Structures

## Proportionality and fair representation and operation of UNISON NI structures

The gender distribution of our membership in NI is 83% women and 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. Branch attendance at 2017 Council was 97% and 72% of delegates were women.

The **Regional Committee** met in formal session 4 times since last Regional Council. The Committee currently has 39 members and its composition currently stands at 70% women. All meetings were quorate. The agenda was dominated by progress on union building, our campaigns against austerity,

crises in the political system, and the implications of EU exit.

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

<i>Branch development group</i>	<i>Education group</i>	<i>Regional pool group</i>	<i>Regional implementation group (also GPF)</i>
Gabrielle Carton	Gabrielle Carton	Gabrielle Carton	Gabrielle Carton
Denis Keatings	Denis Keatings	Denis Keatings	Denis Keatings
Margaret McKee	Carol Hall	Margaret McKee	Margaret McKee
Lucia McKeever	Maura McKenna	Lucia McKeever	Lucia McKeever
Alastair Long	Deborah Yapicioz	Alastair Long	Alastair Long
Stephanie Greenwood	<i>Representatives from</i>	Roisin Byrne	Patricia McKeown
Carol Hall	<i>Branch Education</i>	Nicky Shaw	
Niall McCarroll	<i>Officers, ULRs, lay tutors</i>	Deborah Yapicioz	
Conor McCarthy			

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:** Our NEC member Margaret McKee ended her term as UNISON President at NDC in June to great acclaim.

**Team UNISON** is an amalgamation of all branches and lay structures, and continued to meet throughout the year to aid the co-ordination of our key campaigns. The 2018 meetings concentrated on key UNISON campaigns on public sector pay, fighting cuts,

and our UNISON's participation in the ICTU 'Better work, better lives' campaign.



## Self organised and special issue groups

### 'Giving voice to tackling disadvantage and combating discrimination'

Impending exit from the EU threatens, in particular, equality and human rights and our Peace Agreement commitments. The work of our self-organised groups becomes even more vital in these circumstances. 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 50 members representing 22 branches. In 2017/18, Committee members participated extensively in a wide range of organising and campaigning activity. The Committee held 4 formal meetings over the year.

**Participation:** Work is ongoing to develop further local women's committees or forums based on the NDC motion and inspired by active women's committees in the Royal Hospitals branch and Northern Health branch. Women activists in our branches held a series of events to mark 100 years of the suffrage movement. The Regional Secretary was guest speaker at the full day event organised by Omagh & Fermanagh branch. Women's Committee members 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 union.

**UNISON President:** The Women's Committee was enormously proud that Royal Hospital's Margaret McKee was elected to serve as UNISON President from June 2017 to June 2018. Those who attended NDC were moved

by both Margaret's farewell speech and the tribute to her from Lucia McKeever and Patricia McKeown.



**Conferences and committees:** A delegation of 31 activists representing 19 branches attended the *National Women's Conference*. The delegation spoke on over 20 motions and returned with topics that they wanted to further explore. The NI motion on accessible, affordable and appropriate childcare for all is a key campaigning priority for the Committee and is supported by service groups as a core bargaining issue.

The *2018 ICTU Joint Women's Committee Conference* took place in June in Enniskillen. Deborah Yapicioz moved the UNISON motion on

precarious work and workplace discrimination. This year's seminar theme was 'Better work, better lives for women workers'. Delegates spoke on:

- unequal access to jobs;
- low pay and wage inequality;
- precariousness and job insecurity;
- weakened bargaining power and voice at work;
- inadequate arrangements to reconcile work and family life;
- the erosion of social supports and protection, including pensions;
- austerity and attacks on public services.

UNISON women members are represented on the *ICTU Women's Committee* by Margaret McKee, who has now been elected Vice-Chair, and Danielle McCusker. Both representatives, along with the Regional Secretary and the Head of Bargaining, attended the *TU Women's Council of the Isles* in Dublin in September 2018.

**Our 2018 Work programme** covers:

- ensuring the participation of women at all levels in the union;
- tackling violence against women - including domestic violence and abuse, human trafficking and combating sexual harassment at work;
- campaigning for reform of legislation on reproductive rights, including abortion;
- highlighting the disproportionate impact of austerity on women - supporting gender budgeting and reflecting our demands on the bargaining agenda;
- campaigning for a comprehensive, affordable childcare strategy in policy and in practice through bargaining;
- ensuring that the bargaining agenda reflects women's health needs;
- WASPI women's campaign;
- supporting women in prison.

**Abortion as a workplace issue:** When we embarked on the 'abortion as a workplace issue' survey we did not realise that it was the first of its kind to be undertaken anywhere. UNISON members were the largest responders in the cross-border, multi-union survey of workers in both the private and public sector.

The results fed into the RoI campaign to repeal the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment and now forms significant evidence for the campaign demanding that the UK Government comply with its international obligations and introduce abortion in NI. The survey results were launched in Dublin in advance of the Referendum on the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment and at Stormont in September 2018. The demand for abortion rights was also carried by NDC in a successful emergency motion. In the run up to the Referendum UNISON activists joined with other trade unionists in NI to campaign door to door in some of the border communities.



**International Women's Day:** In celebration of International Women's Day in March, the Committee held a 'Past, Present, Future - Women on the Offensive' event in Galway House. Guest speakers included Therese Moriarty, labour historian; Mags O'Brien, SIPTU official and women's activist; Patricia McKeown, Regional Secretary; and UNISON activists Emer Kelly and Pamela Dooley.

The event tracked the history of the first women trade union organisers through to today's activists, and the battle for women's rights at work, in their unions and in society. We were also delighted to welcome colleagues from the new union Forsa who were in Belfast to meet colleagues in the trade union movement. UNISON members participated in the rally in Belfast on 10 March. The theme was no women left behind, celebrating 100 years of partial suffrage.

**50 years of civil rights:** A delegation of committee members participated in an event organised in honour of Inez McCormack and marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NI civil rights movement and women's role. A panel of UNISON members and activists, from a range of

organisations, participated in the session on current and future challenges. They included Regional Secretary, Patricia McKeown; retired member, Rosaleen Davidson; and UNISON members Kellie Turtle, from Alliance for Choice; and Marissa McMahon, from PPR.



**Regional education programme:** Committee members continued to deliver the women only element of the regional education programme with 125 women members attending our Building confidence for women; Pathways; and Women's health and history courses. These are particularly designed to encourage more women to become active.

In February, 34 new women activists attended the Pathways programme, with a follow up event organised by the Committee at the end of the year. The Health and History weekend took place in May with 29 attending and our special course on Menopause awareness attracted 24 participants.

To advance our work programme we have established some working groups as follows:

**Menopause (sub group led by Jill Weir):** The Committee invited Dr Joanne McManus to Galway House on 12 April to highlight menopause awareness. The evening session gave participants an overview of menopause and provided up to date evidence based information to enable women to make informed choices. In conjunction with this, Committee members Deborah Yapicioz and Amanda Sweetlove worked along with the BBC to raise awareness of menopause as a workplace issue. This featured on the BBC as part of a week's reporting.

**Violence against women (sub group led by Roberta Magee):** The Committee had a presentation from the Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Centre NI. On the same day they attended the '#I Believe Her' rally at the law courts in Belfast on the result of the high profile rape trial. The Group is revisiting Trusts to establish how the Agreements on domestic violence and abuse are operating and has moved the issue to the bargaining table of the Education Authority.

**WASPI (led by Deborah Yapicioz):** The Committee received a grant from the Regional Pool to progress this campaign. The aim of the sub-group is to raise awareness of the changes to the 1995 and 2011 pension acts and to ensure that the 5,000 UNISON NI women members affected receive written information from us and have the opportunity to attend information sessions. They will also receive assistance to complete letters to the DWP to formally record their complaint. The WASPI sub-group is linking in with WASPI NI to deliver this initiative. A membership database has been compiled of affected members and branches will receive updates.

**Women in prisons:** During 2018 Committee members have completed 2 sessions of the Health and History course with women prisoners at Hydebank. Additional members are now trained as lay tutors to lead these sessions.

**Campaigns & demonstrations:** Committee members participated in a further range of activity, marches and events including:

- Sling The Mesh;
- Alliance for Choice demonstration
- Processions (100 years of the Women's Suffrage);
- Together 4 Yes Campaign;
- Abortion as a workplace issue launch;
- NHS 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebrations

The work of the Women's Committee is supported by Area Organisers Marianne Buick and Danielle McCusker

## ■ LGBT Group

The LGBT Group has 125 registered members representing 22 branches across NI. Since 2017 Regional Council, the Group has had 3 formal meetings.

This year marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Foyle Pride and a key element of our programme has been to create events and spaces where LGBT history can be remembered and shared. Our other priorities have included the campaign on marriage equality and a new campaign to bring the NI blood donation deferral period into line with GB.

**Campaigning for Marriage Equality:** *Love Equality* (which comprises of ICTU, Amnesty NI, Student Movement and LGBT organisations) hosted a rally on June 2018 in Belfast City Centre and a simultaneous one in Guild Hall Square, Ferry. With the ongoing political vacuum and a refusal by Westminster to legislate, the purpose was to maintain the profile of the issue with the public and demonstrate support for an early day motion which was being submitted. UNISON members came out in force to participate and our sails featured prominently in the media and social media coverage. Group Joint Chair Martin McConnellogue spoke at the Derry rally.

**Photo Frame Campaign** –As part of the LGBT hospital stalls we brought along our Marriage Equality photoframes. Over 200 staff posed with our 'I Support Marriage Equality' frame and the photos were shared widely on Facebook - [https://www.facebook.com/pg/LGBTUnisonNI/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=1903509349671907](https://www.facebook.com/pg/LGBTUnisonNI/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1903509349671907)

**Blood Donation Deferral Period:** Currently the blood donation deferral period for sexually active gay and bi men has been reduced to 3 months in GB but still remains 12 months in NI. We contacted the Chief Medical Officer and the former Health Minister to seek clarification why we are not in line with UK Government policy. We received a very comprehensive response but were informed a Minister would be required to change the current position. We liaised with Department of Health officials and in September we

organised a seminar entitled Blood Donation – The Science & The Stigma.

The event was targeted at politicians, health professionals and LGBT community. There were presentations from Seamus Camplisson, Head of Policy and Dr Gillian Armstrong, Senior Medical Officer from the Dept of Health; the Rainbow Project's John O'Doherty; Dr Gary Benson, Consultant Haematologist with the Belfast Trust; Becky Glass and David Brinson, from the Sheffield St Company.



The event looked at how the science supported lifting the lifetime ban on sexually active gay and bisexual men donating blood as well as how blood which is donated here gets used (over half to cancer patients). John O'Doherty spoke about the impact of the blood donation ban and the campaign to change it. We also had Becky Glass and David Brinson present some of their findings of the recent Parliamentary Report on the under representation of black, Asian, mixed race and ethnic Minorities in blood, stem cell and organ donation. This was very useful in relation to how to reach out and engage under-represented groups generally. We will now be lobbying for the position to be changed under existing devolved powers.

### Engaging with the Wider LGBT Community & Branches

**Celebrating LGBT History** - As part of LGBT Awareness Week in May, UNISON hosted a Tenx9 storytelling night where nine LGBT people told a personal true story reflecting LGBT history. We supported a similar event entitled 'Journeys' in Derry as part of Foyle Pride's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations where local people told their own stories of being

LGBT. The stories recounted tales of being arrested, attacked, dancing, protesting, fire eating, giving birth and falling in love.

UNISON was delighted to support a publication of Writing Rainbows, a creative writing project reflecting the history and experiences of LGBT people in Derry which was launched as part of LGBT Awareness Week.

As part of this year's Foyle Pride, a very successful history exhibition which attracted hundreds of visitors was held to reflect the past 25 years. UNISON had a section in the exhibition with photos and memorabilia reflecting our contribution to LGBT rights and activism. We also took the Sean Morrin table at the Foyle Pride Awards evening. Sean was a UNISON member for many years and a tireless advocate for LGBT rights.

**Pride Festivals** - We promoted the three Pride festivals via a direct email to all members and via social media. We had a good contingent of members walking in Belfast alongside NI Ambulance Service colleagues who once again paraded in uniform. Members also took part in Foyle and Newry parades. This was the first year we took a stall in Guild Hall Square for the post parade concert and it was well received.

A number of branches made a donation to Newry Pride as they have recently lost a lot of their funding. We had a stall at the Green Party's – Alternative Queer Ulster event in Stormont as part of Belfast Pride.

**LGBT Staff Forum Hospital Stalls** – In July and August we had lunchtime LGBT stalls with the Health Service LGBT Staff forum in the Mater, RVH, Belfast City, Lagan Valley, the Ulster, Linenhall St, Altnagelvin, Causeway, the Downe, Craigavon and Daisy Hill.

The branches were very supportive, with UNISON goodies to give away and local reps helping on the stalls. The purpose was to invite staff to support their local Pride Festival and increase visibility through the distribution of rainbow lanyards, LGBT posters and literature. We received a very good reception and the new pens and stress toys provided by

the Public Health Agency were particularly popular. Overall we distributed more than 1000 rainbow lanyards and 200 LGBT posters to promote inclusive workplaces.

**UNISON LGBT Conference:** 6 delegates attended from NI and participated in the debate. Conference motions primarily focused on the continuing visibility of transgender people and greater inclusion and recognition of non binary people as well as the importance of self identification. This was in anticipation of a UK Government consultation on a Gender Recognition Act scheduled for 2018.

A motion was passed welcoming the reduction of the blood deferral period for men who have sex with men to three months in GB but condemnation was expressed that it will remain at 12 months in NI. Delegates spoke on a number of other motions including being out in work, domestic abuse in LGBT relationships and negotiating for LGBT rights.

**Other Events:** In November, during the Outburst Queer Arts Festival, we supported the Stand Up for Trans Rights comedy night. This was based on the very successful Marriage Equality event held in 2017. 7 local trans people took to the stage in the Blackbox in front of an audience of almost 200 people using comedy to reflect their issues and lives.

As part of LGBT Awareness Week we hosted a drop-in Health & Wellbeing Day in our Derry office with stalls from LGBT organisations, advocacy groups and health services. It was attended by over 100 people.

We ran workshops on 'Supporting Young Trans People in School and Youth Settings' as well as Bi Visibility and hosted Professor Arnsberger from California University at an event to talk about older LGBT people. Our Joint Chair Martin McConnellogue was invited onto the panel of the Beyond Tokenism Conference in Derry. We attended the Pink News Awards launch at Stormont which was addressed by some of the political leaders.

The work of the LGBT Group is supported by RO (Education) Fidelma Carolan.

## ■ Disability Group

The Group has met 3 times since last Regional Council. Outreach to branches has resulted in increased membership of 15 (8 women and 7 men) from 9 branches

### Committees, conferences and events:

Committee members participate on the ICTU Disability Committee and UNISON's National Disability Committee. Marjorie Trimble attended and spoke at the ICTU Northern Biennial Conference and Paul Allen represents the Committee on Regional Committee. We will be represented at the UNISON Disability Conference in October 2018.

In May, over 100 activists, staff and employers attended the 'Mental Health in the Workplace' seminar organised by the Group. Speakers included Thomas Mahaffy, Head of Organising; as well as

representatives from our National Disability Committee, Equality Commission NI and the Belfast Health Trust. There was also a presentation from an employee's perspective. Attendees at the seminar were provided with a range of information on supporting workers with mental health issues in the workplace such as employers' legal obligations; and practical steps to support staff and best practice, in particular the success of UNISON led partnerships with health Trusts.

**Workplan:** A plan of work is currently being developed for the year ahead which includes the impact of Universal Credit on our members and their families with disabilities. The work of the Disability Group is supported by Regional Organiser, Joe McCusker

## ■ 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 sends 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 2018 in Liverpool. Unfortunately, conference run out of time before the NI motion on 'Access to immigration advice and representation' could be heard. The delegation produced a conference report that was circulated to all our BMW members.

**UNISON Black and Migrant Workers Easter Party:** With increasing UNISON recruitment of newly arrived migrant workers, we organised a party at a time and location to suit members with families and children. We provided advice at the UNISON corner, while others could enjoy music, face painting

Kerala Beats performance, dance shows and beautiful Indian and Filipino food.



The aim of the party was to encourage new members to join; showcase services we provide; give members access to information; but also give members from various community groups an occasion to socialise together as UNISON BMW members. The party was a real success with 80 to 100 people attending on the night. We were also hoping to identify new activists for our Group. This is still 'work in progress' and will remain on our agenda.

**Union activities and demonstrations:** The Group was involved in regular union activities such as May Day and also helped drum up support (literally) on the NHS 70<sup>th</sup> birthday demonstration with Kerala Beats marching behind the Group banner and performing on stage.



The Group attended a diversity rally to help the Kerala Beats group fundraise to send money over to Kerala following the floods that have devastated that part of India. Many of our members were directly affected and hospital branches were also contacted to raise funds for Kerala.

**Migrant workers and EU Exit:** The group has kept abreast of developments on EU Exit and attended events in London and across NI to gauge the future process for registration and, more generally, the potential consequences of EU Exit on migrant workers living here, and to give evidence of current racial profiling at our ports and airports.

A survey we carried out between August and October is currently being analysed to assess the impact of EU exit on our members and to establish to what extent migrant workers have already been affected in their work and daily lives. Through our e-bulletins and Facebook page we have disseminated information including the guidance recently produced by UNISON.

**Supporting Refugees:** Regional Committee continues to support refugees through our education programme. English classes and immigration advice clinics were well attended by refugees, and asylum seekers have been referred on through community organisations (and word of mouth within the asylum seeker community).

We continue to push for a pathway to practice for doctors and nurses in discussion with the Health Trusts, Chief Medical Officer, NIMBDA and BMA. Some of the refugees and asylum seekers attending our classes were also involved in meetings to share their concerns and expertise with Trust officials. One of the students will be pioneering clinical placements in the autumn. This is a huge step towards achieving a proper pathway to medical practice in NI and ensuring we no longer lose asylum seeker doctors and nurses to Health Trusts in England and Scotland.

**IELTS English Exam:** For a number of years our Group campaigned with others in UNISON to push the NMC to change the English criteria imposed on overseas nurses to practice in the UK. Our group submitted motions to UNISON conferences and sent petitions and 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 (OET).

Since last Regional Council, the NMC has now finally recognised the OET as a possible way to evidence English competency and allowed for IELTS scores to be consolidated over two sittings. The Group welcomed those changes and worked with the Education team to set up an OET preparation class in September.

**Other activities:** The Group successfully accessed the Regional Pool to provide new promotional material and to expand our activities. It is concerned that, as a result of changes to data protection legislation, the UNISON application form has been redrawn and no longer seeks ethnic monitoring breakdown. We are currently awaiting advice from HQ as we do not see how changes in data protection legislation can impact on positive action monitoring in this way.

**Immigration advice clinic:** Appointments were dominated during 2018 by referrals from refugee support agencies. There was a steep increase in the need for immigration advice for our members in recent months. We have also received a number of immigration queries raised by newly arrived members through branches. Not having

access to immigration advice through our own legal representatives makes supporting members very difficult.

While clinics and the immigration phone line would be sufficient for non work related general immigration advice, the consequences of people not accessing the right immigration advice when facing a difficult work issue can be hugely damaging. This makes our motion to get immigration advice integrated into our legal services absolutely crucial.

**English classes:** The general English class went from very small numbers at the end of last year to being the biggest of the two classes towards the end of June. The IELTS

preparation class remains very popular. Numbers vary each week but the class reached full capacity on a number of occasions. We are also piloting a new OET preparation class starting in September.

The work of the BMW Group is supported by Local Organiser Nathalie Donnelly.

*Table 9: English classes*

Course	Total	Men	Women
General English	19	5	14
IELTS preparation	24	9	15
Assessment for IELTS class	29	19	10
Assessment for OET class	21	12	9

## Special issue groups

### ■ Retired Members' Forum

The Retired Members Forum met 3 times this year. The Forum has 45 members and its composition currently stands at 76% 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 participated 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.

The Forum issues a very comprehensive newsletter at regular intervals and members undertook presentation and public speaking training in November 2017.



**Conferences and meetings:** Members are active on a variety of UNISON, ICTU and NGO bodies and during 2018 have participated in:

- UNISON NI Regional Council and Regional Committee
- UNISON National Delegate and Retired Members Conferences;
- ICTU Retired Workers Committee
- Age Sector Platform

- 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.

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.

The work of the Forum is supported by Senior Secretary Liz Robinson.

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	Mary Ferris
ICTU Biennial Conference	Martha McGonigle Archie Thomson
UNISON Retired Members Conference	Martha McGonigle
National Pensioners Convention Conference	Victor Murphy

## ■ Young Members’ Forum

The young member’s forum met 6 times during 2018. Composition is still restricted to a small number of branches and a priority for the Forum is to encourage more young members to get involved.



**Outreach:** In early 2018, the Forum held an outreach night. With the support of branches, Forum members are now holding additional young members meetings, undertaking workplace visits and are producing new literature to encourage young members to get involved. November is young member’s month and Forum members are organising an event to highlight this.

**Conferences and committees:** A delegation of 6 members attended the National Young Members Conference. They presented their campaign “Two Jobs Too Much”, highlighting that many young workers need to work two jobs due to the lack of permanent employment or decent contracted hours. Our team came second overall with their campaign.

They also raised the issue of the 2<sup>nd</sup> child tax credits cap and pressed for this to remain on the agenda of the National Forum. We are represented on Regional Committee by Geraldine Thompson; the National Young Members Forum by Lorna McLarnon, Jason Magee and Dearbhaile Liddy; and the ICTU Young Members committee by Emer Kelly and Lorna McLarnon.

Forum members linked in with community groups in the lead up to the NHS @70 celebrations and attended the rally with young people who made their own banners.

The work of the Forum is supported by Area Organisers Susan Neil and Caitlin NiChathail.

## Health & Safety Group

The Health and Safety Group has met 3 times during 2018. Its key objectives remain:

- to continue to encourage stewards in all branches to attend health & safety training;
- to expand the Forum by encouraging participation from all branches;
- to support health & safety officers to continue carrying out inspections in the workplace;
- to actively participate and take the lead within all employers' health and safety committees.

**Workers Memorial Day – 28<sup>th</sup> April 2018:** On Workers Memorial Day members from 5 branches attended the wreath laying event at the Memorial Tree in the grounds of Stormont together with colleagues from other unions. UNISON had the largest group of Health and Safety Officers present.

**Hazards conference – July 2018:** In July 2018, a number of health and safety officers and reps attended the successful Hazards Conference in Stoke on Trent.

**NIC/ICTU Health and Safety Committee:** We are represented on this multi-union Committee by Ray Rafferty, Royal Hospitals and Emma Jane Cullen, Orchard Branch. Anne Campbell, Causeway and Pete McCahon, NI Ambulance are substitutes to ensure regular attendance.

**Training:** Regional Committee requests that the organising team encourage all UNISON

reps to attend health and safety training as a core tool in achieving improvements in working conditions for our members and to access the statutory time off with pay facilities in both the public and private sectors. The next course is scheduled for October 2018.

**National health and safety committee :** Colin McKinnon, Craigavon branch was elected to the national health and safety committee.

**National health and safety seminar – March 2019:** It has been announced recently that the biennial UNISON national health and safety seminar will take place at the Waterfront Hall, Belfast in March 2019, the first time it has been held in NI. We are encouraging all branches to send delegates to this important seminar.



The work of the Forum is supported by Regional Organiser, Nuala Conlon.

## 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 45 members of the Health Service Group representing 17 branches. Its current composition of 58%

women is out of proportion and is under review, together with the scheme for electing representatives to the national sector groups. The group met 4 times since 2017 Regional Council and is fully functioning.

**Local Government and Education Service Group:** There are 22 members of the Service Group representing 10 branches. Its composition currently stands at 73% women. The group has met 4 times since last Regional Council and is fully functioning.

**Social Care Forum:** There are 19 members of the Forum representing 9 branches. Its

composition currently stands at 95% women but, as reported in Section 2, much of the work on home care now lies with the Homecare Steering Group

**Nurses Forum:** There are 31 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 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 (until June 2018)	Margaret McKee
NEC	Margaret McKee, Lucia McKeever, Alastair Long
Local Govt Service Group Executive	Gabrielle Carton and Daphne Harper
Health Service Group Executive	Roberta Magee, Maura McKenna and Jill Weir
Health Sector Committees	Ambulance – Alistair Long Operational Services – John Murray Nursing – Alan Philson Science & Technical – Stephen McNeill
Higher Education	Vacant as a result of privatisation
Women’s Committee	Roberta Magee and Irene Graham (to Feb 2019)
Disability Committee	Amanda Sweetlove
LGBT	Gillian Foley; Martin McConnellogue
National Young Members Forum	Lorna McLarnon; Jason Magee; Dearbhaile Liddy
Health and Safety	Colin McKinnon; Clare Martin (sub)
National Black Members Committee	Flora Alfante; Anecita Tomada
National Retired Members	Angela Boorman

# Developing membership services

## The UNISON College

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UNISON College continues to offer the widest range of trade union education and member learning in the UK. Over the past year we held 134 courses and workshops which engaged 1700 participants. This included 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 participants of whom 80% were women. In addition a small number of UNISON activists completed courses directly with ICTU. Many elements of this part of the programme are open to activists and members alike. We are currently carrying out an online survey of activists and members to ensure our 2019 programme meets their needs.

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 70 topics which were attended by 1200 learners. In addition, 110 completed the Level 4 Open University K101 Introduction to health & social care module to June 2018 and a record number of 182 applications were received for the 2018/19 course.

This year we introduced online booking via the UNISON NI website which has proved popular and we set up an Education Facebook page to promote workshops. In addition we are working to get more alignment between the branch assessments and take up of training. This is to ensure that

each branch has a broad selection of reps with the range of skills and knowledge to build capacity.

While the majority of our courses take place in the UNISON centres in Belfast and Derry, we have offered training in Ballymena, Strabane, Bushmills, Enniskillen, Antrim, Armagh, Newry, Craigavon, Cookstown 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.

Overall we have engaged an increased number of activists on previous years and attendance from women is still very positive at around 80%. However, around 15% of workshops were cancelled due to insufficient numbers and we are continuing to deal with no-shows on the day in spite of new measures being put in place. This is a considerable cost to the union. While we appreciate it can be due to staff shortages or unanticipated events, we are looking at increasing engagement with attendees

before each workshop. We are also carrying out an online survey of activists and members to get feedback and suggestions for our 2019 programme.

**The Organising Steward:** We have trained 46 new stewards who have completed both module 1 & 2 for ERA accreditation. All stewards now gain an OCN Level qualification. The pathway now takes them onto the Introduction to Grievances & Disciplinarys as well as Sickness Absence courses. This ensures that all new stewards have the confidence to support members locally with representation within the first six months of being elected.

**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. This year we introduced the three day Understanding Power and Challenging Sectarianism course. Two were run as branch based initiatives and the feedback has been very positive. We intend to roll this out further in 2019. The Programme promoted a number of workshops run by self organised groups including Mental Health in the Workplace and LGBT issues. This helped the events reach a wider audience.

**Supporting Partnerships:** UNISON College has supported a number of the UNISON-led workplace partnerships through the provision of bespoke training to support the work. This has been delivered by Pamela Dooley.

**Health & safety:** Over the past number of years there has been a very successful focus on increasing the number of health and safety trained stewards. This year we introduced a 10 session evening course which ran very well and we intend to repeat that model in 2019. In total 124 activists and members took part in the programme.

There has been a mixed response to the resilience and suicide workshops for activists. We still regard it as important to offer activist only sessions to enable participants to have the freedom to reflect on cases they have dealt with.

**Branch officer training:** We ran a range of courses targeted at branch officers, not only supporting specific roles but also branch finance and governance. Our Data Compliance workshop was very well attended and all branches have sent representatives to Finance and the Organised Branch over the past few years. We had another successful Union Learning Rep course and branches are already seeing the benefits of increased member knowledge around our learning offer as well as training plans for reps.



**Development education for women activists:** 125 women activists and members participated in our women's development programme. In response to a request from the Women's Committee we organised a Menopause Awareness workshop with Dr Joanne McManus from the Belfast Trust. The Women's Committee have progressed this to put the Menopause on employer agendas as a workplace issue.

Pathways continues to be a key route for new and aspiring women activists to develop knowledge, skills and confidence with 29 women completing it. The mix of newly trained stewards and women members who have expressed an interest in becoming more involved works very well.

**Developing leadership:** We held 4 workshops on leadership and effective communication 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 the menopause workshop with the Women’s Committee; working on a fast track nursing programme for overseas nurses and the refugee doctors initiative with our Black & Migrant Workers Group; and supporting the LGBT Group on its campaign on the blood donor deferral arrangements.

**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.



While there was less engagement with NISCC and NMC revalidation workshops, increased awareness of obligations has encouraged members to access our work related courses.

This year we ran targeted Interview Skills for porters, cleaners and classroom assistants. These aligned with upcoming recruitment in various hospitals and schools to tie in with recruitment of permanent posts and were attended mainly by agency workers or temporary staff. Feedback from local reps was positive.

We also offered Interview Skills for the Open University Nursing Programme in each Trust area which engaged 76 members, many of whom successfully gained a place on the course. We also have an expression of interest list for those who wish to apply so they don’t miss out on the opportunity. This is particularly important for community based staff as well as those who may not see Trust email communications.

**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.

However, the Department for the Economy has insisted on changing the parameters of the fund and have proposed an end to funding for non accredited courses and for courses above Level 2. This has a significant impact on our programme as we utilised it toward the Level 4 Open University K101 and our Member Learning workshops. Through ICTU we have made strong representation and await an outcome.

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 £90,000 worth of education grants and £20,000 in employer match funding.

**Essential skills:** Essential skills programmes have continued in the Western, Northern, South Eastern and Belfast Trusts with 141

students participating. However, numbers have been lower than past years 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. 110 people from all Trusts completed the OU K101 Introduction to Health & Social Care in June 2018. 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 2018/19 intake was advertised in May and 197 applications were received from across the Trusts. Significant time has been put into supporting those applicants to process their applications.

The course is £984 and while a number of people qualified for the Student Finance grant, there was insufficient funding to support all. We have postponed the start of the programme until February 2019 with the aim of securing additional funding to enable more people to be facilitated onto the course. There is still a very positive uptake on the programme from lower banded staff with 82% identifying as bands 1-3.

A significant piece of work has been the development of a fast track nursing programme for qualified overseas nurses who are not on the NMC register and are working as care assistants. We initiated this and engaged with Directors of Nursing, Four Seasons and independent healthcare providers.

We launched a survey with 60 responses and are currently are negotiating with the Open University for a 180 credit programme with a view to submitting a business case to the Department of Health. This would enable these individuals to realise their potential in a nursing role and for the employers to benefit from their skill set at that level and bring additional nurses into the public and private sector workforce

**Bursaries:** UNISON offers a range of bursaries for study towards trade union studies, women's studies, GCSEs, vocational courses and Open University. Members from Down Lisburn, Northern Health and C&V branches received bursaries this year.

Table 12: UNISON College trade union education by course and main topic, 2017/18

Course	No. of Sessions	No of Student Places		
		Total	M	F
<b>STEWARDS INDUCTION TRAINING</b>				
The Organising Steward (Module 1)	4	52	12	40
The Organising Steward (Module 2)	4	46	16	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>STEWARDS &amp; REPRESENTATION</b>				
Introduction to grievance & disciplinaries	2	18	4	14
Representing members at sickness absence	2	21	6	15
Representing members in bullying cases	1	9	1	8
Employment law – General	1	20	6	14
Dealing with redundancies	1	7	3	4
Writing statements for NMC	1	8	1	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>NEGOTIATING AND CAMPAIGNING</b>				
Negotiating Skills	2	19	9	10
Agitating for political change/The Assembly	1	12	3	9
Blood donation – The science & the stigma	1	25	7	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>EQUALITY TRAINING</b>				
Campaigning for equality	1	21	10	11
Understanding power & challenging sectarianism	3	54	15	39
Using equality laws to win	1	7	2	5
Supporting transgender young people in school and youth organisations	1	7	1	6
Understanding issues for older LGBT people	1	7	1	6
Understanding Islam	1	6	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>HEALTH &amp; SAFETY - REPS</b>				
Health & Safety module 1	3	34	8	26
Health & Safety module 2	3	34	6	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>HEALTH &amp; SAFETY &amp; WELLBEING</b>				
Dealing with bullying at work	2	8	0	8
Dealing with stress	4	45	2	43
Suicide awareness training	2	25	5	20
Mental health first aid for activists	1	16	7	9
Suicide awareness for activists	1	13	5	8
Foundations of personal resilience for activists	1	17	2	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>BRANCH OFFICER TRAINING - COMMUNICATIONS</b>				
Using social media in your branch	1	8	1	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>

Course	No. of Sessions	No of Student Places		
		Total	M	F
<b>BRANCH OFFICER TRAINING - WELFARE</b>				
Branch welfare officers	1	5	0	5
Branch H&S officers	1	3	1	2
Money Management	1	4	0	4
Total	3	12	1	11
<b>BRANCH OFFICER TRAINING – FINANCE</b>				
Branch Treasurer OLBA training	1	9	2	7
Finance & the organised branch	1	9	0	9
Data Protection Compliance	1	27	8	19
Total	3	45	10	35
<b>BRANCH OFFICER TRAINING – UNISON EDUCATION</b>				
Union Learning Reps	1	8	3	5
Total	1	8	3	5
<b>DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION FOR WOMEN</b>				
Building Confidence for women	4	34	0	34
Menopause Awareness	1	24	0	24
Women's health & history	2	38	0	38
Pathways	2	29	0	29
Total	9	125	0	125
<b>BUILDING NEW LEADERS &amp; UPDATING EXISTING LEADERS</b>				
The Effective Chairperson	1	9	2	7
Communication Skills	3	28	4	24
Total	4	37	6	31
<b>TOTAL 2017/18</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>154 (20%)</b>	<b>600 (80%)</b>
<i>2016/17</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>717</i>	<i>140 (19%)</i>	<i>577 (81%)</i>

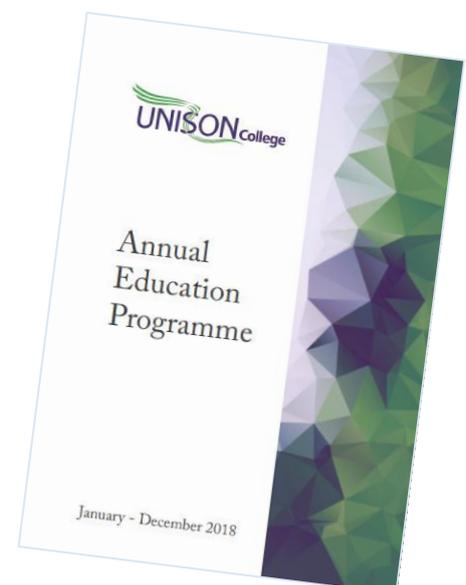


Table 13: UNISON College member development and lifelong learning by course and main topic, 2017/18

Course	No. of Sessions	No of Student Places		
		Total	M	F
<b>Protecting professional registration</b>				
NISCC	1	6	1	5
NMC Professional Accountability and Record Keeping	1	10	1	9
Revalidation& Reflective Practice for Nurses	1	5	2	3
RQIA – Maintaining compliance	1	8	0	8
<b>Supporting yourself and others</b>				
Communication Skills	3	28	4	24
Dealing with Bereavement and Loss	1	10	0	10
Foundations of Personal Resilience	2	21	0	21
Keeping Children Safe Online	1	8	1	7
Losing a Baby: What do parents want and need?	1	23	1	22
Managing Your Time	1	10	1	9
Presentation and Public Speaking Skills	1	9	1	8
Mindfulness	4	59	4	55
<b>Supporting you in your job</b>				
Acute Head Injury: Recognition and Early Management	1	11	2	9
Anaphylaxis	2	36	4	32
Autism	7	158	26	132
Caring for a Person on Oxygen Therapy	1	14	3	11
Caring for a Person with Gastrostomy Tube	1	12	3	8
Caring for the Older Person	1	9	3	6
Delirium	1	9	2	7
Dementia	4	60	4	54
Dignity at the Heart of Health & Social Care	1	7	1	6
Female Genital Mutilation	1	12	0	12
Medication Administration - The Importance of Accuracy	2	28	5	23
Palliative Care	6	61	6	56
Promoting Good Stoma Care	2	21	0	21
Self Harm & Young People	1	20	1	19
Sepsis	1	21	2	19
Spiritual Dimensions of Care	1	26	4	22
Wound Care	2	27	3	24
<b>Interview skills</b>				
Interview Skills for Health & Social Care	1	7	1	6
Interview Skills for OU Nursing	10	76	14	62
Interview Skills for School Support Staff	3	35	3	32
Interview Skills for Health Service Porters/Cleaners	2	28	15	13
<b>Planning for Retirement</b>				
Planning for Retirement	2	71	9	62
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>946</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>817</b>

## ■ 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;
- DHSSPS Domiciliary Care Workforce Development group.

## ■ Communication

The new format for the course programme is popular and the printed A4 Member Learning Programme was distributed in hard copy and by email. A regular activist email is sent out with details of upcoming courses. Each month all joiners received a welcome email from the Education team notifying them of the available opportunities.

Courses are promoted on the main UNISON Facebook page and the bespoke Education Facebook page. 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 2017 – June 2018	Applications 2018/19
Belfast Trust	35	46
Western Trust	21	39
Southern Trust	23	49
Northern Trust	19	16
South Eastern Trust	29	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>197</b>

## ■ 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 2017 – Oct 2018	Students
Belfast Trust	3 x ES Literacy 2 x ES Numeracy	31
Western Trust	2 x ES Literacy 1 x ES Numeracy	36
Northern Trust	1 x ES Numeracy 3 x ES Literacy	41
South Eastern Trust	3x ES Literacy	33
	<b>Total</b>	<b>141</b>

## There for you - Welfare services

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**UNISON NI Welfare Group:** The Group met 3 times this year with 11 branches participating. With 31 members (75% women) the Group has successfully encouraged more branch welfare officers to attend meetings in order to share information and good practice. During 2018, the Group encouraged a large number of branches to use UNISON welfare services. It received a presentation from The Rowan: Sexual Assault Referral Centre on this vital service which covers the whole of NI.

The Welfare Committee AGM is scheduled for 26 November 2018. Margaret McKee (NEC) is the Welfare Trustee for UNISON NI and will attend the AGM. The Committee will receive a brief on 'Power of Attorney' from Thompsons, and a report back from the 4 committee members who attended the UNISON There for You seminar in Croyde Bay in September. The Welfare Group is supported by Senior Secretary Liz Robinson.

**Octopus lottery:** The former Octopus lottery was re-launched in 2018 and the Committee has a sign-up campaign in place. It holds an annual fundraiser at Regional Council to raise much needed funds for this vital service which helps many UNISON members in times of crisis.

**Welfare Grant Payments (from October 2017 to 31 August 2018):** UNISON NI members received a total of £10,142.17 during the period, covering a range of assistance such as clothing and emergency grants; white goods and furniture; special payments; funeral and utility costs. Regional Committee congratulates branch welfare officers on obtaining these vital payments/items for members in crisis.



**Winter Fuel Grants: 2018:** 113 members applied from NI branches, 66 were successful and a total of £2,640 was awarded.

**School Uniform Grants 2018:** 84 members applied from NI branches, 51 were successful and a total of £3,850 was awarded.

## UNISON Living - Financial Services

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

**LV** visited the region twice this year and in November 2017 donated £100 high street vouchers which were won by a homecare worker. They have committed to the same for 2018. In addition, they were in contact with every branch at least once by email and arranged some sponsorship for our Newry and Mourne branch 'There for you' sponsored walk.

**Vauxhall** send literature directly to branches.  
**UIA** have not visited the region this year.

**Abbey Insurance** were very active this year, attending the majority of AGM meetings, branch recruitment events and meeting with organising staff. This activity resulted in:

- Motor Policies - 5359
- Home Policies - 869
- Travel Policies - 72

**Lighthouse** have hosted 21 surgeries, 3 seminars and 2 mortgage stands since last Regional Council. In addition they have had 60 individual appointments. The mortgage stands were a pilot but Lighthouse are keen to continue with them. They would encourage branches to make contact with Gillian McGrath for more information. They

now have a team of 3 advisors living and working in NI and looking after our members - Brenda Douglas, Alexis Stewart and David Bannon.

**UNISON Health & Dental plans:** 171 plans are covered in NI.

**UNISON Protect** signed up 869 new Policies in NI from November 2017. This includes 700

for the free accidental death cover. John Eccles visited the region in April. This visit included a number of branch visits and a products and services presentation to Organisers. All NI branches are on their electronic contact list and all branch requests for literature were fulfilled. For more information contact [jeccles@uibuk.com](mailto:jeccles@uibuk.com).

## Legal services

The following is an update report from our solicitors Thompsons to the end of August 2018 on cases and activity. Earlier this year Regional Committee extended condolences to Thompson's Managing Partner Una McClure on the death of her father Gerard McClure who, along with our colleague Paul Shevlin, was founding partner in Thompson's predecessor firm.



### ■ UNISON Personal Injury Cases From Sept 2017 to Aug 2018

Table 15 - UNISON Personal Injury Cases from Sept 2017 to Aug 2018

	2016-2017	2017-2018
Cases received	205	208
Cases closed	193	182
Cases won	106	102
Cases lost	0	2
Cases discontinued/turned down	63	56
Cases where no contact from client	24	22
Turnaround time average	18 months	18 months
Damages	£1,002,447	£607,101
Average Damages	£9,457	£5,952

- **£82,000 for Nursing Auxiliary.** The member received damages for a serious fracture sustained when they slipped on a wet floor during the course of their employment with the HealthTrust.
- **£25,000 for Homecare Worker.** The member sustained whiplash type injuries following an RTA when the vehicle they were travelling in was struck by a bus.
- **£7,500 for Voluntary Worker.** The member was shopping in Sainsbury's when they slipped on a wet floor and fell sustaining injuries to their right leg.
- **£10,000 for Health Care Assistants.** The members sustained injuries following the inhalation of fumes during the course of their employment with a Health Trust.
- **£20,000 for Staff Nurse.** The member sustained injuries following an assault by a patient.
- **£3,500 for Support Service Worker.** The member sustained a needlestick injury during the course of their employment with the HealthTrust.
- **£7,500 for Catering Assistant.** The member developed a skin complaint which arose as a result of their employment with the Education Authority.
- **£20,000 for Payroll Officer.** The member sustained a head injury when they fell down a flight of stairs during the course of their employment with the Health 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:

- We pursued Tribunal claims for a group of UNISON members who were employed as support workers for elderly people. They

alleged that their employer had not paid them the National Minimum Wage during their sleepover shifts. The cases were settled and the total amount of compensation recovered was £15,000.

- A manager in the private sector settled an unfair dismissal and a failure to pay the correct holiday entitlement case for £5,500.
- The case of Darren McGavigan v Western Urgent Care concerned a breach of minimum wage and was successful at an industrial tribunal hearing. The Tribunal rejected the suggestion by the employer that they were complying with their statutory and contractual obligations by adding up all the actual hours worked and producing an average hourly rate. The Member recovered compensation to reflect what he ought to have been paid and the employer was ordered to pay costs of £5,000.

## ■ Extended legal services, training and events

**Free wills service:** Members can avail of the Free Wills Service. Solicitors attended a number of branch functions to advise on this.

**Criminal Law:** Criminal representation was provided for members at police stations facing both work (e.g. rape, theft, fraud, assault and ill-treatment) and non-work (e.g. road traffic) allegations. For those charged, representation was provided at Court where required. In one very recent case of drink driving we successfully deployed a 'special reason' argument to reduce an obligatory 12 month disqualification to a mere 6 weeks.

Special reasons are notoriously difficult to plead and the standard of proof is exceptionally high. We also advised members on a number of criminal queries which did not amount to police involvement but which the member required information on such as lost money on a pyramid scheme; child protection issues and (c) publication of alleged offences in the media.

**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.



Negotiating and bargaining on behalf of members, and promoting equality

## Our bargaining sectors

We are in our second 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 maintain a substantial level of uncertainty. A critical example of the impact has been the delay in paying the 2017 pay rise in health resulting in arbitrary pay reductions to meet increased pension costs.

We have challenged the behaviour of the Department of health which continues to drive forward *Delivering Together* in an unaccountable and contrary way. Strategic and policy discussions are taking place which will have transformational impact on health services. UNISON leads the demand that unions must have a seat at the table at these discussions. There is a battle a day to monitor developments and ensure accountability and transparency. We are not prepared to have 'transformation' used as the new buzz word for a cuts agenda. 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 2018 has been 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. Last year's Regional Council added some key priorities to our agenda:

- challenging privatisation across the sectors;
- challenge privatisation of home care and pursuing up-banding for Trust care staff;
- 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 by applying S75 to cuts;
- bargaining for recognition agreements;
- equality bargaining with priority on gender pay gap and reporting;
- paid time off for IVF treatment;
- challenging the reduction in pay of special needs staff by changing contracts;
- strengthening our bargaining structures inside the union and at employer level;
- impact of EU Exit on workforce and services;
- tracking changes in the health workforce;
- workforce planning and career pathways;
- pursuing ethical procurement, including the supply chain, in health and education;
- 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 brought the UNISON Ethical Care Charter to all health structures. Their excuse for not signing off to date is the absence of a Minister. We reject this position and continue to press for endorsement and implementation of the NI Human Rights Commission recommendations on public procurement.

On domiciliary care we pressed for and secured release of the DoH commissioned report. UNISON further secured seats on the steering group tasked with setting a new model. On the in-house side, we have forced all Trusts to maintain the direct workforce at current levels with a view to restoring in-house delivery. We continue to negotiate with some Trusts on the reconfiguration of services.

We continue to challenge the increased use of private medicine and have now raised our concern at the extension of contracts with private sector care providers into the field of

mental health and on the use of agencies and locums which is draining resources from the service.

In education we are acutely aware that the 'transformation' agenda could be used in the wrong way and we are pursuing the Department of Education for direct discussion on all key areas.

UNISON is on full alert and we recognise that privatisation is a very real threat as the EA continues to struggle 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.

Last year we reported that NI health workers were 3% behind the rest of the UK and that ending the break in pay parity remained our number one priority. We fought for and secured the release of 1% for 2017 despite the system protesting that no Minister was in place.

The UNISON UK-wide claim for 5% resulted in successful negotiation in England, Scotland and Wales for an uplift in Agenda for Change pay terms. In NI, however, we are facing obstruction by the DoH again citing absence of a Minister as the reason why negotiations are stalled. Our response has been a campaign rejecting this position and demanding pay justice. In addition to the public campaign, we are preparing an industrial action strategy.

In education and local government we secured the 2 year NJC pay agreement and are now preparing for negotiations on 2<sup>nd</sup> year band adjustments. Unlike health, the Department of Education acknowledges this as contractual and not a matter for Ministers.

**Our demand for a real living wage across all sectors:** Despite resistance from DoH, health Trust employers have agreed to commence discussions on the removal of band 1 to secure a living wage.

As described above, negotiations in education should ensure that all workers rise to, or above, the living wage threshold.

We lodged claims to meet the living wage demand in the private sector and are preparing to take similar action in the community & voluntary 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 private homecare project steering group. Regional Organisers work closely with our specifically assigned Fighting Fund Organisers and relevant branches. In the case of private sector nursing homes which have changed ownership, we continue to pursue members' rights through TUPE.

**Strengthening our bargaining structures inside the union and at employer level:** As reported last year, we completed work on the Council motion to strengthen the capacity of our Health Service Group to respond on UNISON-wide priorities and co-ordination of bargaining interventions at branch and JNC level across employers. 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.

The volume of meetings with the Education Authority as it becomes a centralised organisation has significantly increased. Consequently, members of the Education and Local Government Service Group and organising staff have increased responsibilities inside the new EA structures with 5 Directorates and an increased level of lay involvement in all bargaining and negotiations.

While the Social Care Forum continues to meet, much of the work on social care has now transferred to our Homecare Steering Group. Consequently the Health Service Group will consider the future of the Forum.

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. Following a meeting in September 2018 we have agreed in principle a new protocol for the Unit's oversight of our NMC casework. We will continue to use, by agreement, our small panel of external experts who support our casework in this area. We are reviewing the increased demand for NISSC representation.

**Legal cases success:** In addition to the legal report in Section 1, a significant and ongoing case is our joint application to the Industrial Tribunal seeking contractual pay for staff with 'sleep-in' obligations in their contract of employment. Up to 300 UNISON members are involved. The case is fully supported by our legal department but is stayed behind the Mencap appeal in GB.

## Bargaining for equality

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.

UNISON has moved equality to the top of the negotiating agenda in the key public sector negotiating bodies. However, it is increasingly clear that employers are side-stepping their statutory duties and we continue to challenge. Priorities adopted last year include the gender pay gap and a new issue of paid time off for IVF treatment. We have put our proposals to public sector employers and asked for an audit and information on how they currently respond. We had previously placed menopause on the bargaining agenda and the equality managers in health and education are reviewing current policies to ensure that resources are available to support women workers.



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. We have secured recognition of the right of women workers to include public holidays in the calculation of maternity leave. We continue to challenge the absence of equality impact assessments on cuts and reorganisation proposals which result 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.

In health, meeting our demand on the abolition of band 1 AfC will have the effect of bringing large numbers of women workers to living wage levels and will restore some of the ground lost since our successful equal pay campaigns. In the community, voluntary and private sectors, almost every issue confronting our members derives from inequality or discrimination.

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. We have alerted the health service in particular of the fact that workers lose child care vouchers as they move across jobs, departments and Trusts. This is a new threat which the EA must now also take up.

In conjunction with our Women's Committee we are currently revisiting the operation of our agreements on handling domestic violence and abuse. 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 EQIAs.

## The Impact of EU Exit (Brexit) on the workforce

As outlined in Section 3 of this report we continue to engage in a range of activity aimed at protecting workers rights that are at risk through exiting the EU.

It has been agreed by employers, political parties and wider civil society that NI will be very exposed by EU Exit due to a loss of migrant workers. The only official NI Executive position on Brexit highlighted that both our public and private sectors are 'highly dependent' on accessing EU migrant workers. However, the signs coming from the UK Government are that there will be no special arrangements for NI to allow EU migrant workers to continue to travel to work here after Brexit.

Several thousand workers cross the border each day to work in health and education. Although the continuation of the common travel area should allow cross border workers to continue to work in public services in NI, we are working with our allies in CAJ to put pressure on both the Irish and UK Governments to ensure these arrangements continue into the future.



However, the loss of EU funding for cross-border health services, which have developed over the last 20 years now puts jobs and services at threat into the future.

Employers in health and education have been slow to engage with unions on the potential impact on the workforce. In health, we have now been invited to join a Departmental Steering Group. To date there have been no proposals from the Education Authority or the Department of Education.

## Education Authority and related employers

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The collapse of devolution and the absence of a Minister continue to pose real challenges for 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 team at the Education Joint Negotiating Council. The deficit in the education budget of £105m is impacting on the EA workforce at HQ and school levels.

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 difficulties.



Current negotiating issues include:

- we are participating in an EA review of contractual issues for classroom assistants;
- we await the database on temporary workforce numbers and also workers impact by EU Exit across the EA;
- we are now at the negotiating table on school transport re-configuration;
- 2020 NJC pay award
- the DoE led review of the school meals service has raised issues for our membership which are reflected on this year's Council agenda. Our emphasis is on restoring the nutritional meals service which was piloted by the first Education Minister as a result of UNISON intervention. The review includes increasing the take-up of school meals;
- we continue to negotiate on the impact of school mergers, amalgamations and closures on existing staff and protection of TUPE rights;
- we led the campaign to resist the closure of the outdoor youth centres successfully retaining 4 of the 8 threatened centres. We negotiated job retention for those staff opting to remain and we continue to resist the decline of statutory provision;
- we are also supporting our members in the C&V sector delivering youth services.
- we are currently negotiating pay protection for all workers redeployed as a result of the new EA structures;
- we successfully challenged an EA proposal to end crossing patrol services as a result of the current budget situation. This has alerted our members and branches to the fact that all services are currently vulnerable;
- we have served a claim on the voluntary grammar schools where we have members seeking application of the 2018/

## Further & Higher Education, Libraries & Youth Justice

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### ■ Association of NI Colleges (ANIC)

This sector continues to struggle with underfunding. The closure of the employers negotiating body ANIC in June last has further exacerbated problems for NI regional colleges. Wage negotiations have been concluded in Scotland which settled at 3% for those earning under £6k. Negotiations are still ongoing in England with a 5% or £1500 claim. Wales, with a 7.5% claim, is heading to a dispute.

The direct membership of all unions has shrunk as a result of the privatisation of support services. We are currently in discussion with our colleagues in the other unions on a strategy to advance pay negotiations for the direct workforce. Meanwhile we retain membership in the privatised services and will lodge a claim similar to the NJC pay award with the contractor companies.

## ■ Higher Education

**Pay and the direct workforce:** The UK wide pay claim submitted by TU side is for 7.5% or an uplift of £1500 per annum, whichever is the greater. The 2% offer from employers has been rejected by UNISON, EIS and UCU who are also balloting. Our ballot closes on October 25<sup>th</sup>. The GMB voted to accept the offer. Our membership at both the University of Ulster and St Marys work in a combination of in-house and outsourced services.

**Privatised services:** In the University we have lodged a pay claim with Noonan. The contract is out to tender and we await

further engagement with both the client and the contractors. We secured a 3% pay increase for our members employed by Mount Charles catering



## ■ The NI Library Authority

Industrial action short of strike commenced in late summer 2018, in response to the employer resisting a demand for job evaluation for senior library staff. The campaign continues:

- for sustainable funding to maintain book stock, embrace technological advances, improve all existing premises and extend opening hours;

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

## ■ Youth Justice Agency

Members in the Youth Justice Centres were TUPE transferred into the civil service structures and are now on civil service pay terms and conditions. The recent imposition of 1% was imposed on the civil service.

We have managed to retain our membership and have a seat at local bargaining structures but are excluded from regional bargaining forums .

## 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. Many aspects of bargaining have been constrained by the absence of Government but we are constantly challenging the employer when this excuse is not legitimate. There is a continuous battle to resist the tendency of Trust corporate managements to act as individual employers.

In addition to the main bargaining issues detailed above, we have scored some success on pay and equality - notably compliance with Agenda for Change and pay maximisation which has led to the largest payouts in the UK for low paid staff. We have used job evaluation to lift hundreds of home care workers from Band 2 to Band 3 in two Trusts and continue the campaign with three others.

UNISON has made strong interventions on the failure of employers to ensure that workers are paid correctly and on time and do not suffer

reductions in pay in contravention of collectively bargained agreements. We are continuously challenging staff shortages, delays in filling posts, and over-reliance on the use of agency staff.

We led the public campaign and the bargaining interventions to correct the unacceptable deduction of wages which occurred in August as a result of additional pension costs. We are tracking the 'Transformation Money' released earlier this year and demanding information and accountability of how it is being spent. Following our demands we are now receiving details of Trust delivery plans (cuts!) arising for the latest budget round. Overall cuts of 40m are sought. This is likely to lead to the same intensive campaign waged by UNISON in 2017.

In the Ambulance Service a major review is underway led by the Department. Our senior lay representatives are participating in working groups covering job roles, training and service delivery. NIAS itself has developed a set of proposals on how this might be achieved including increasing the numbers of posts. Consultation on those proposals is underway. An outstanding grievance on the JE process remains unresolved.

## Private Sector

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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.

The Four Season pay offer included:

- 0.75% increase for workers (excluding nurses) who had not received an equivalent pay increase since 2 Oct 2017
- 1% increase for nurses who had not received an equivalent pay increase since 2 October 2017

In addition as reported in Section 3 the UNISON led partnership project is highlighting much of the change required.



The future of the HSCB and the PHA has yet to be determined. While reorganisation has ostensibly been stalled we are concerned that decisions are being taken behind closed doors which will impact on jobs and services. Senior level decisions in BSO continue to cause major problems as a result of the failure to ensure adherence to collective agreements and more recently the absence of consultation on procurement. Our own members working at the front line of BSO have borne the brunt of the righteous anger of affected members and we have demanded that BSO also takes steps to support its own staff.

- An increase for all under 25 year olds (excluding apprentices and trainees) to a minimum of £7.45 per hour
- All supervisors to receive a minimum of £8.00 per hour, maintaining the 2% differential

Negotiations on harmonising pay throughout the company continue and our regional team meets with Four Seasons NI to deal with local issues and queries.

We stopped privatisation in all but the voluntary grammar schools some of which use contractors. Interserve, Aramark and Sodexo have been served with a claim equivalent to the terms of the NJC pay award and we are awaiting a response and anticipate employer resistance. We may be entering a dispute with United Cleaning who have reneged on an agreement to maintain the link with NJC pay agreements.

## ■ GP surgeries

We undertook a series of visits to advise our members of their rights and also to encourage GP staff to join the union. Consequently, we have again increased membership and are developing claims. We have now alerted Trusts that we will not accept attempts to transfer NHS staff in

surgeries to the GP payroll. In some instances we have to be vigilant as some member are persuaded to transfer in the mistaken assumption that their pay and conditions will be better. This is not the case, particularly with regard to the health service pension scheme.

## Community and Voluntary Sector

Our membership in the sector ranges from mental health and learning disability organisations to Housing Associations, Age NI 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 in

Community and voluntary sector organisations across NI In many cases employees have continued to work without pay due to delays in funding from government departments. In response to particular concern on the 5% reduction in

Supporting People funding, our branch has launched a new campaign, details of which are currently being shared across the members in meetings throughout NI. Pay freezes are widespread across those employers given the cuts in Supporting People funding.

Where we have recognition agreements, we have raised the claim for application of the NJC pay award but have had no success. However, in Housing Associations we have secured a 2% pay uplift. In Age NI we are awaiting a pay offer and hope to improve on the imposed 1% in 2017.





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



We now have a world record for the longest period without a functioning Government. We have been actively campaigning for the return of the Assembly and Executive but we are clear that it must operate as a rights based Government with the political will to implement our Peace Agreement.

The likelihood of a return hinges on the fate of the Tory Government which is being kept in power by the 'confidence and supply' arrangement with DUP MPs at Westminster.

The absence of Government and the relevant Ministers is now adversely impacting on our members, their jobs and pay, and on service delivery. We understand that the Secretary of State now intends to put legislation through Westminster that will allow civil servants to take decisions if they are satisfied that it is 'in the public interest'. The guidance that accompanies this Bill suggests that this may be where decisions are required to maintain the delivery of public services, but that major policy changes or major decisions on spending should be left to Ministers.

We will continue to scrutinise and challenge civil servants, in order to ensure that we do not see these powers being used to impose major service changes without proper consultation with UNISON members, service users and the wider public and without democratic oversight and accountability.

Political instability continues despite significant challenges to the Peace Process itself. We will shortly know if the UK Government will embark on a 'hard' exit from the EU or reach agreement. Our work over the past 2 years, particularly with ICTU and our allies in equality and human rights, has been dominated by our attempts to convince the UK Government, the Irish Government and the EU of the steps necessary to protect equality, human rights and the Peace Process itself. Our current concern is that an agreement will be reached which sidelines the rights of the people of NI and concentrates instead on borders, tariffs and trade.

The UNISON Agenda remains much as it did last year given that so many of our demands require a functioning Government and political will. In the absence of both, progress has been stalled.

Later this year Regional Committee will host a significant conference highlighting the actions needed to challenge growing health inequality. This is work that should have been undertaken by devolved Government and the Department of Health. However, we cannot wait and we cannot afford to have 'transformation' in health which does not address one of the deepest inequalities in our society.

Our engagement with health policy makers in the absence of a Health Minister has been difficult and is reflected in the report in Section 2. We are clear that 'partnership' and 'co-design' must include UNISON and our members. We are also clear that there is a latent privatisation agenda and we will be at the forefront of challenging it.

In education, we have already witnessed some of the arbitrary decisions that can be taken by a Government Department or a public body in the absence of a Minister and Parliamentary oversight, and without regard to our equality duty. We have intervened on proposals to reduce or remove special needs provision and

a recent attempt by the EA to walk away from its responsibility for child safety by proposing that crossing patrol services are merely traffic management and should not be part of our education support services.

Across the public service, budgets are in severe difficulty and ultimately it is our members and the public that will bear the harshest impact. For this reason we continue to press all parties to take responsibility.



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 the 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 agreements to protect women's health;
- challenging poverty and inequality; and
- providing our members with support to access existing entitlement to the benefit system while at the same time reversing the discriminatory changes now in place.

We continue to prioritise the demand for an inclusive, enforceable Bill of Rights for NI. As we stare into the abyss of EU exit it is needed more than ever.

## ■ The impact of exiting the EU

There is now no doubt that the impact of EU Exit will be felt throughout the membership and across this island and throughout GB. 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.

This has included engaging with the UK and Irish Governments, the EU institutions, UK political parties and all local political parties to urge them to address key priorities and secure the best options for NI. We have been at the forefront of the debate on EU Exit within UNISON and have led the campaigning activity undertaken by ICTU on these issues.

At the time of writing, the negotiations on the UK withdrawal from the EU are running out of time, with an outcome required by November at the latest. A 'no deal' scenario is a growing possibility, with a complete lack of agreement within the Tory party as to what form the UK exit from the EU should take, and what the future relationship between the EU and UK should be, never mind agreement on these issues with the EU. In all of our campaigning activity, we have called for:

- 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;
- protection of cross-border health and education services;
- securing a right to remain for EU citizens;
- protection for our public services from any economic downturn;
- guarantees for 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 NICICTU 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 campaigning activity locally, at UK level and in Brussels.



We brought this message to the Durham Miner's Gala in July, seeking solidarity from our brothers and sisters across GB trade unions, asking them to write to their local MPs asking that they take the actions necessary in Parliament to protect the Agreement. We thank those trade unionists who took up our cause and who have written to MPs, from all parties, to seek these assurances.

In March, we undertook a successful lobby of the UK Parliament, meeting key figures in the Labour Party, Government, and House of Lords as the first major piece of the EU withdrawal legislation, the European Union (Withdrawal) Act, passed through Parliament. This Act significantly diminishes human rights and equality protections based on EU law and undermines NI's unique constitutional settlement agreed through our Peace Process. However, we were able to secure an amendment to the Act through the Labour party that gave some recognition to

protecting NI's particular circumstances during the process of withdrawal.

Considerably more is needed to mitigate the impact of EU exit on the Good Friday Agreement and equality and human rights. In May, the Regional Secretary delivered our message of the importance of protecting the peace process directly to the Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn when he visited NI and met with ICTU. We will continue to influence the Labour position as we move towards crunch decisions on EU exit issues in the coming months.



**'Hard exit' or 'backstop' – the impact on jobs, trade and the border:** Regional Council set out its position last year when it declared that despite the UK Government intention to have a hard exit 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 our members.

The 'backstop' of 'full alignment' with the EU Internal Market and Customs Union for NI, both now and in the future, has been agreed to in the absence of other solutions, but only in relation to those rules which are viewed as supporting North-South cooperation, the all-island economy, and the protection of the Good Friday Agreement.

The UK Government has rejected the EU translation of this Phase 1 Agreement in the draft Withdrawal Treaty, which proposed a common regulatory area in respect of NI where free movement of goods could take place and North-South cooperation would be

facilitated. The draft Withdrawal Treaty would also have provided for NI to be part of the customs territory of the EU. The UK Government, the Labour Party, and the DUP (upon which the Tory Government depends for their survival) have all rejected this wording on the basis that it differentiates NI from the rest of the UK and separates it from the rest of the UK market through an effective border in the Irish Sea. Agreement has yet to be reached on the wording of this text.

There is also a complete lack of agreement within the Tory party as to what form of future relationship the UK should have with the EU. The most recent UK Government position, reached at Chequers in July, suggests a free trade area for goods, within which the UK as a whole will continue to apply a 'common rulebook' on goods with the EU, with a commitment to ongoing harmonisation with the EU, subject to Parliamentary approval (which would be essential to ensure continued frictionless trade).

On customs, the UK Government is proposing that a Facilitated Customs Arrangement will be created, removing the need for customs checks and controls. The UK Government believes that this will allow them to apply their own tariffs and policies for goods intended for the UK, and the EU tariff and policies for goods intended for the EU. Whilst leaving open scope for negotiation, the EU side has publically rejected these plans, on the basis that they would undermine the EU Single Market.

Politically, even if the UK Government can reach an agreement on the future trade relationship with the EU, its ability to achieve Parliamentary approval of that agreement is questionable. The Labour party has stated that it will not support the Chequer's proposals and a number of Tory Brexiteers have come out against them also.

**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) Act 2018 is designed to convert the body of existing EU law into UK law and has the potential to significantly undermine workers rights and equality protections, which will no longer have the force of EU law. The Act also undermines the devolved powers of the NI Assembly around employment law and equality law and removes the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

We worked with colleagues across the UK and with CAJ, the Equality Coalition and the Human Rights Consortium, to oppose the Act as outlined above. A second Act to implement whatever agreement may be reached with the EU is expected within the next 12 months and we will continue to fight to reinstate the Charter and reverse the damage done to devolution.

The Phase 1 Agreement reached between the EU and UK in December 2017 specifically recognises that EU law and practice has provided a 'supporting framework' in relation to rights and equality in NI and across the island of Ireland and states that the UK will not allow any diminution of rights as a result of exiting the EU. However we are growing increasingly concerned that in reality, rights will be diminished and that the UK wishes to limit the implementation of this part of the Agreement at the expense of workers' rights and equality protections. In all our campaigning activity around equality and rights issues, we have highlighted the solutions which exist to protect rights going forwards, including finally legislating for a Bill of Rights for NI.

**Protecting the rights of migrant workers:** 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. Two years into the process, employers are finally meeting us to discuss the impact on the workforce. In health, UNISON has made a series of demands for data and analysis and has joined a health service steering group.

We have also begun the process of engaging with employers on the costs of the EU Settlement Scheme that will require all EU migrant workers and their families to apply for 'settled status'. This scheme will open in March 2019 and is expected to cost £65 per adult and £32.50 for children under 16. We will be making a call for financial support from employers for the lowest paid workers.



We continue to support the work of the NI Council for Racial Equality (NICRE) and CAJ in this area focused on the impact of an EU exit on (i) the rights of EU migrant workers and their families to remain in NI, and (ii) the impact on non-EU nationals through the possible introduction of a more restrictive immigration regime generally.

Through the work of CAJ, which recently presented to ICTU, we are also alert to attempts by the UK Government to move responsibility for border and immigration controls to front-line workers, particularly in health, education and housing. 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.

## ■ Economic strategy

The impact of growing inequality on our members is rising. UNISON has long recognised the inter-dependence between a vibrant economy and strong socio-economic rights. 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. We have recently highlighted the scandalous situation of UNISON members in health having to resort to food banks.

**Economic impact of EU exit:** The Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI) supported by ICTU has produced extensive data on the projected impact of EU exit on the economy in both NI and RoI. It is clear that exiting the EU presents significant risks to both. Our economy 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 RoI.

Outside of both the Single Market and the Customs Union, we would be subject to tariffs and quotas on our exports. For this reason, it is vital that NI remains a member of both the EU Single Market and Customs Union to protect trade and jobs here. There is a heightened awareness of the potential danger in the border communities and particular concern in UNISON branches based there.

**Precarious employment:** A further casualty of the political situation is the lack of movement to protect jobs against increasing casualisation. NERI has reported that permanent full-time contracts currently comprise the lowest share of the NI labour market than at any other time since 2008 and that close to 40% of workers are employed in non-standard working arrangements.

NERI also found that 11% of workers employed in the public sector in NI are working on a temporary contract compared to 7% in GB. 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.

We have used these findings to challenge zero hours and agency work at the bargaining table throughout 2018 and Regional Council has called on all branches to be vigilant by constantly monitoring and challenging the situation at local level.



**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 Voluntary Exit. These are devastating blows to the economy and will widen and deepen inequality.

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, most recently estimated by the Department of Finance as £250 million per year. 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. This suggests that the devolution of corporation tax will remain a threat to public sector spending if a new Executive is formed.

In the absence of an Executive, the introduction of a 12.5% rate has not taken place, but announcements are expected in the UK Treasury Autumn budget on how and when this may take place. We will continue to oppose attempts to strip our public services of resources in this way.

**Budget and Public Finances:** As with last year, the lack of an Executive being in place has meant that a NI Budget has been passed by the Secretary of State through Westminster. This process began with the NI Department of Finance producing a Budgetary Briefing paper in December 2017. All of the budgetary scenarios presented here continued to effectively suggest an ongoing decline in public sector spending, including major cuts to public services. We strongly objected to this approach and called on the civil service to instead advise politicians of the resources that are required to both maintain existing services and reform services where this is required to improve them and ensure their sustainability.



It was also extremely surprising that this document contained no detailed assessment of the impact that exiting the EU may have on the NI economy and public finances. It is clear that exiting the EU presents significant risks to our economy and that lower economic growth and resultant reducing tax revenues may have significant knock-on effects on public spending.

We further strenuously objected to the proposed 'revenue raising' measures suggested by the Department of Finance here, including charges for domiciliary care and rises to Housing Executive rents, which would deepen poverty, widen inequality and undermine public services.

In July 2018, Westminster passed the finalised NI budget. This followed the trend of previous budgets with regards to spending on our vital health, social care and education services. Whilst spending on health was to be increased, this amounts to a cut due to inflation in the cost of health and social care running at 6% per year, and cuts to Trust's budgets are expected imminently. Similarly, whilst spending on education has been increased, the EA has still reported a funding shortfall of £58 million for 2018/19, having previously stated that the funding gap in education will grow to £350 million by 2019/20.

NERI has estimated that 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.

**The DUP-Tory 'Confidence and Supply' agreement funding:** 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.

The 2018/19 budget included £100 million in funding for health service transformation in the 2018/19 financial year. The Department of Health has identified a significant number of projects to be funded and we are closely monitoring how this money is being spent by the system, given that delivery of these projects will require the recruitment of 1200 additional staff, which seems unlikely. It should be noted that this funding must be spent in this financial year and is non-recurrent. At a recent meeting of the Health Service partnership we challenged the Permanent Secretary to confirm that this money will not be returned to the Treasury. We await an answer.



Given the political uncertainty that exists at Westminster, further funding for public services under the DUP-Tory deal remains theoretical and dependent on the survival of Theresa May's Government and the continuing support of the DUP.

## ■ 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.*

The Department of Finance estimates that £2.6 billion is spent on NI public procurement in a typical year. In the absence of Government we cannot gauge if 2017/18 is regarded as typical and we are concerned 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 NI parties. We are scheduled to meet with the

Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) through ICTU.

We continue to press for:

- Application of the CPD / ECNI guidance on equality and sustainability in public procurement;
- 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:** We continue to press for significant changes to the homecare procurement processes. As we reported last year, we 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.

Due to our advocacy, the ‘Power to People’ report published in December 2017 recognised that workers in the sector are ‘exploited’, underpaid and undervalued. Whilst not addressing all issues of concern, a clear recommendation has been made that workers must be paid at least the Living Wage. We are seeking implementation of this recommendation as a priority, and will continue to fight for better terms and conditions of employment for workers within the private sector. We want to see an end to zero-hours contracts, workers not being paid their expenses and an end to the practice of 15-minute visits which do not provide adequate care.

A significant barrier to progress on improving conditions for the workforce has been the procurement process itself, which has led to 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 ‘Power to People’ report has recognised the flaws within the current models of

procuring services from the private sector. They have recommended the development of fair funding tariffs, with greater market regulation to ensure pay within the sector is improved. In our view, a reformed procurement and commissioning process for adult social care needs to include explicit requirements to improve pay and conditions for the workforce as part of contracts themselves. Our goal will be to ensure that any extra money for providers is translated into more pay for workers.



At Trust level, procurement exercises have been put on hold whilst the Department of Health considers how to implement the recommendations of the Expert Panel. We are meeting on a regular basis with Departmental officials on these issues and will not accept any proposals which do not meet our objectives. We are setting out the model that we expect to see implemented by the Department, the HSCB and all Trusts. This includes our demand for a reversal of the trends of outsourcing and privatisation.

We continue to seek best practice in the operation of public procurement with the following placed at the centre of this process:

- ethical procurement, and the promotion of equality and human rights;
- application of the CPD / ECNI guidance on equality and sustainability in public procurement and
- the recommendations of the NI Human Rights Commission on human rights and procurement.

Public procurement laws are grounded in EU law and could be significantly affected by the withdrawal of the UK from the EU. This 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.

## ■ Employment and trade union law

This is another section of our core work which remains in suspension due to lack of Government. 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.

Despite the lack of a Government to legislate on the promised zero hours protection and on the gender pay gap, we have continued to press for movement on both issues at the regional negotiating bodies in both health and education as reported in Section 2.



## ■ 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.

Regional Council has strongly supported our branches in Fermanagh, Antrim and Belfast

by highlighting our opposition to fracking and drilling in debate at Council meetings over the past 2 years. On the return of devolution we will renew our campaign with Government.



# Low pay, poverty and targeting social need

## ■ Challenging poverty

Our hope that the NI Government would comply with the Judicial Review decision and develop an anti-poverty strategy based on objective need, foundered with the collapse of the Assembly but our lobbying work continues.

Poverty and economic inequality in NI continue to dominate and are directly related to the failure of our Government to address this issue. 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 shows that:

- around 103,000 individuals have a household income of between £270 – £300 per week, placing them either below or on the poverty thresholds;
- 20% of individuals were considered to be in relative poverty after housing costs were factored in, compared to 18% in 2015/16. This raise in poverty levels suggests that a rise in housing costs is impacting on those with the lowest incomes;
- the long term trend shows that children in NI are at a higher risk of living in poverty than the overall population;
- the majority of those in relative poverty belong to working families. In total, 181,000 working-age adults were in relative poverty before housing costs were factored in, with 60% in working families and 40% in families where no one was in work.

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 continued attempts to cut school uniform grants; the impact 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 impact of PIPs causing stress and hardship to disabled people trying to access the benefits that they need.



**School uniform grants:** As we reported last year, UNISON successfully challenged the attempt to cut school uniform grants, leading to this cut being almost immediately reversed by the Department of Education. However, leaked budget plans from the EA suggest that school uniform grants could again be targeted for cuts. We have publically condemned this suggestion, highlighting the harm this would cause to working-class families and the negative impact it would have on already poor educational outcomes for children living in poverty. We will continue to challenge any move to cut school uniform allowances.

**Two child cap and rape clause:** As we reported last year, we have been involved with our allies in the Women's Policy Group and the Equality Coalition 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 continue to work with our allies across civil society to identify applicants for a legal challenge against the cap and rape clause. A legal challenge that was launched through the High Court in England by the Child Poverty Action Group has been unsuccessful but is due

to be appealed. Our allies in Women's Aid, the Law Centre and CAJ are liaising with civil society organisations to offer assistance with this legal action. In addition, the Attorney General in NI has referred the two child cap to the Supreme Court arguing that it breaches Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The working group is considering how to intervene in these proceedings. We will continue to fight hard against this discriminatory policy which will cause considerable harm to the most vulnerable.

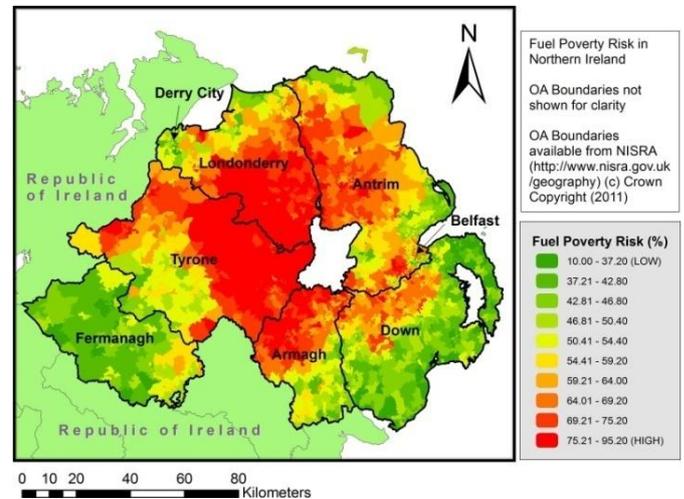
**PIPs:** The change from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) has had serious negative effects on persons with disabilities. Evidence from our allies in the disability sector would suggest that the change to PIPs is resulting in more people being refused benefits. Whilst these may then be restored on appeal, the stress and anxiety caused by the assessments and appeals processes is considerable. Regional Committee will work with the Disability Group to progress campaigning in this area in the coming year.

**Low pay:** 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 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.

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. The

DUP-Tory deal includes funding of £20m a year over 5 years to target severe deprivation. However, in the absence of an Anti-Poverty strategy, this money has instead been allocated in this year to the Department of Education, DAERA and Department of Health for existing programmes, with the concern that the money is simply being used to cover cuts to budgets.



**UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights:**

The UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights is due to visit the UK in November 2018 to examine the situation with regards to poverty and the implementation of human rights standards. In advance of this visit, we have submitted evidence to the Rapporteur on the two-child cap; the linkages between poverty and health and education inequalities; the lack of an Anti-Poverty Strategy; the impact of austerity; and the need to raise public sector pay and implement a real Living Wage in NI. We are working with allies across civil society to ensure the Special Rapporteur visits NI in November and engages with UNISON during this visit.

**Childcare:** UNISON, alongside other trade unions, NIC-ICTU, our allies in the women's movement, NGOs and a number of community and voluntary organisations, have come together to form the Childcare for All campaign. This is in response to the spiralling costs of childcare, which denies parents, particularly women and the lowest paid, the opportunity to stay in work, education or training. There is still no dedicated Childcare Strategy for NI. In October, the UK Government ended the Childcare Vouchers scheme for all new applicants.

The campaign is calling for universal, child-centred childcare that meets the needs of children, families and childcare workers. UNISON has signed the Childcare for All charter calling for a childcare system that is affordable, accessible, offers high quality provision and which recognises the value of childcare through decent pay and terms and conditions for workers. We will continue to work with our

allies to advance the campaign objectives in the coming year.

**NI Anti-poverty Network:** Thomas Mahaffy, Head of Organising remains on the Board of the NI Anti-Poverty which continues its lobbying role with the help of UNISON and despite the withdrawal of all funding and loss of its staff.

## ■ 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.

Major changes to the welfare system continue to be rolled out without adequate political scrutiny or accountability due to the lack of an Executive and Assembly.

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 continues to be phased in, with organisations like the Law Centre reporting increased calls for advice due to the complicated nature of the benefit and the fact that new claimants wait up to 5 weeks until receiving their first payment, causing financial hardship. It has been estimated that its introduction will affect more than 300,000 families with more than 100,000 worse off.

Whilst the Executive had previously agreed that mitigations will be available for families claiming Universal Credit, these mitigations will end in 2020 with no certainty as to future arrangements.

In June 2018, the National Audit Office (NAO) published a report which states that the introduction of Universal Credit has failed to deliver any promised savings and has left thousands in financial hardship. They have stated that it cannot be proven that the system helps more people into work or that it provides value for money. It has been stated that the roll-out of Universal Credit across the UK is now 6 years behind schedule, with £2billion having been spent on its introduction. The NAO also found that the Department of Work and Pensions were often dismissive of the difficulties and hardship caused.



To effectively tackle poverty, it is essential that Government puts poverty reduction at the core of their economic and social policies and ensures 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 short-term mitigation measures. 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. As outlined above, we successfully secured a recommendation to this effect within the 'Power to People' report on the reform of adult social care.

All campaigning on these issues will continue to be informed by our bargaining activities in combating low pay and economic inequality.



## ■ Community & voluntary sector

A growing concern for our members in the community and voluntary sector over the last 12 months has been the sustained attack on the Supporting People Programme. This Programme provides vulnerable people with support to live independently in the community, including through the provision of specialist housing or hostels. It supports at least 19,000 people every year and benefits a wide range of groups including the homeless; persons with disabilities; persons with mental health issues or a learning disability; older people; women at risk of domestic violence; young people at risk; and people with addiction issues.

UNISON members in the sector work hard to provide these vital services, but are doing so under increasing pressure and are suffering pay cuts or pay freezes and an erosion of their terms and conditions because of a lack of funding. Funding is not rising to match demand and the increasing cost of providing services. These cuts have taken place despite evidence showing that every £1 spent on the programme saves the public £1.90 elsewhere.



On November 7<sup>th</sup>, we will be supporting our community and voluntary sector branch to launch a campaign calling on the Department for Communities, the NI Housing Executive and all other Government Departments and public bodies with responsibilities in this area to reverse the cuts; ensure workers are not exploited further; and commission an independent, expert-led review of the Programme to make recommendations on future funding. The campaign will begin with a demonstration outside the Department for Communities HQ in Belfast.

## UNISON campaigning for health and social services

**Delivering Together:** The former 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. Last year we reported on how we were focusing on how decisions were being taken in the absence of political accountability. Over the last 12 months we have intensified our efforts in order to protect and promote our members rights and to act as advocate for their health, the health of their families, and public health in all dimensions of the population. We have continued to press the Department on:

- how it is assessing the future organisation and location of services, seeking full transparency;
- how the £15 million allocated to the new Workforce Strategy will be spent;
- how the Department proposes to commission services in future, given the proposed closure of the HSCB and our position that the commissioner/provider split be abolished; and
- what actions will be taken to reduce health inequalities.

Throughout these processes we have been frustrated by a lack of full transparency from officials in the absence of a Minister. Given

the ongoing political stalemate and the possibility that civil servants will be given enhanced decision-making powers, we will continue to press for full engagement with UNISON and the wider Partnership Forum.

**NHS 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary:** In July, we celebrated a landmark birthday for our health service and used this opportunity to remind the public and those who organise our health service that the founding NHS principles remain just as relevant 70 years on. Over the last 70 years the NHS has saved countless lives and been a powerful agent for social change. We took the opportunity to say thank you to the health and social care workforce past and present, who often work in difficult circumstances to deliver care for the public good.



We produced leaflets, ran newspaper ads and undertook media interviews to state that the universal health service, free at the point of need, taxation based and publically provided, must continue. We called for sustainable funding in order to improve the health of the public, eliminate health inequalities and meet the challenges of the future. We raised particular concern at the extent of privatisation in both medicine and social care.

On 30<sup>th</sup> June, UNISON led a march of thousands of trade unionists under the ICTU banner culminating in a rally at City Hall urging the public to continue to support a public health service. The majority of health service workers addressing the rally were

UNISON members and the keynote address on behalf of ICTU was given by Patricia McKeown, Regional Secretary.



**Cuts to the health budget:** Last year, we reported on the campaign against the £70 million in cuts the 5 HSC Trusts were ordered to make in-year. Through our campaigning, we secured the release of some funding to offset some of the worst proposed cuts that would have severely impacted on the health of the public. However, it was clear from the letter issued to Trusts by the Permanent Secretary at that time that much larger budget cuts are envisaged and that without intervention the health crisis will deepen.

We continue to fight austerity in our health service, as the July budget passed by Westminster does not provide enough resources to allow our health service to stand still, let alone respond to the increasing demands and costs of providing services. We anticipate that the 5 Trusts will again bring forward 'savings plans' proposals in the coming weeks, this time amounting to nearly £45 million. These cuts continue to be imposed on the health service, despite the last Executive agreeing that a period of 'double running' will be necessary in health and social care, to deliver existing services whilst developing and implementing change. We continue to remind the system of this commitment at every turn and will press for the investment that is desperately needed.

**Review of adult social care:** We reported last year of our extensive engagement in early 2017 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.

The publication of this report was delayed due to the lack of a Health Minister, but following interventions by UNISON it was eventually published in December 2017 ('Power to People – Proposals to reboot adult care and support in NI'). However, progress on its recommendations is not possible when the political situation remains unresolved.

Whilst UNISON is represented on the Project Team and Project Board established by the Department of Health to prepare proposals to implement the 'Power to People' report for any incoming Health Minister, we are concerned that in the absence of a Minister and without the scrutiny of the Assembly, civil servants will simply seek to continue policies which have led to the system facing collapse and which have led to workers being exploited. In the current political vacuum, we continue to put pressure on officials to take decisions which do not require political approval and which would significantly improve the situation for our members.



The population of older people in NI is expanding dramatically, particularly in relation to the proportion of working age adults. Currently, just under £900m is spent on adult social care across the board, but it is clear that the current levels of spending do not meet identified levels of need. We believe that services are currently significantly underfunded, which in turn is placing huge pressure on acute care, often as a result of delayed discharges from hospital due to the lack of appropriate care packages.

The recent 'Power to People' report has stated that this combination of factors means that the system is collapsing in slow-motion.

It recommended that charging be introduced for domiciliary care. Our position has been that the fairest way forward would be fund social care through general taxation, with the public funding a truly integrated social care system, provided through the public sector. We have opposed charging in our discussions with the Department for these reasons.

Due to our advocacy, the 'Power to People' report has recognised that workers in the sector are 'exploited' and are underpaid and undervalued. Whilst not addressing all issues of concern, a clear recommendation has been made that workers must be paid at least the Living Wage. We will seek implementation of this recommendation as a priority, as outlined above in relation to our actions on procurement.

In all our engagement with the Department, we remind that the 'exploited' workforce the 'Power to People' report refers to are largely those whose jobs have been outsourced over many years to the private and community and voluntary sectors. We have been clear that these reasons alone, such trends should be reversed, with services being moved back 'in-house' to the public sector. Our key demand remain that:

- trends in the privatisation and outsourcing of social care must be reversed, with services moved 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 be 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;
- 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 pioneered by UNISON over the last 18 years, must move from the fringes of the social care system to become mainstreamed good practice.



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.

**Safeguarding vulnerable adults and protecting workers:** In June 2018, the Commissioner for Older People (COPNI) published a report into Dunmurry Manor

Care Home following an investigation. It detailed shocking and appalling abuse and neglect of residents. COPNI began its investigation into Dunmurry Manor after former members of staff alleged that poor and unsafe practices were taking place. The COPNI report states that the relevant authorities were aware of the concerns around the low standard of care within Dunmurry Manor but did not provide an appropriate response to protect the basic human rights of residents and their families. Similarly, Dunmurry Manor and Runwood Homes are accused of systemic failure in their response to respond to concerns which were raised with them.

The report details unsafe working practices, a lack of appropriate equipment, inadequate staffing levels and high levels of use of agency staff, a high turnover of staff, a lack of training and poor morale. The report details numerous changes in management of the home and staff being told not to speak to RQIA during inspections. The report raises serious concerns about how social care settings are inspected, monitored and regulated, including in relation to how our members are enabled to raise concerns about unsafe practices, abuse or neglect.

Prior to the publication of the report, we had agreed in principle with the new Chief Executive of RQIA to establish a protocol for the exchange of information in relation to social care so as to ensure that as the regulator it responds to our members'

concerns and takes appropriate actions to improve the quality of care. We have prepared a draft Protocol and await RQIA to agree to this. We intend to seek similar arrangements with each Trust and the NISCC.



We have produced internal guidance for staff on how to advise and support members in raising concerns regarding the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and detailing how UNISON should report such concerns to the relevant Trust and RQIA. These processes are being taken forward in advance of RQIA agreeing to any protocol with UNISON.

Over the next 12 months, we intend to build a body of evidence around how care is currently being inadequately provided due to outsourcing, inadequate staffing, and inadequate budgets. We will use this evidence to put the system under pressure to hold private providers it pays with public money to provide services to account. We will also use this evidence to expose the anti-trade union attitudes our members encounter and force those providers who do not wish to engage with UNISON to do so.

## Campaigns in our Education Services

**Budget cuts:** An ongoing concern is the impact of the sustained funding crisis on our education services. Whilst spending has been increased in this year's budget, the EA has still reported a funding shortfall of £58 million for 2018/19, having previously stated that the funding gap in education will grow to £350 million by 2019/20.

We have already seen an attack on the extended schools programme which makes vital provision for disadvantaged children.

This is an ongoing campaign. Whilst we have previously successfully resisted attempts to remove school uniform grants, leaked budget plans from the EA suggest that this is once more under threat.

In August, we publically condemned the leaked budget plans for the EA, which suggested a range of cuts to services, including removing school crossing patrols, withdrawing uniform allowances and compulsory redundancies in schools. We

believe that this was a cynical attempt by the EA to pave the way for sweeping cuts in education by using the current political vacuum as an excuse to revive old attempts at cuts that have previously been defeated by us. We will not tolerate any such attempts to disregard worker's rights or bypass UNISON as the main trade union representing staff. We will continue to challenge the EA at the bargaining table as outlined in section 2 of this Report.

While we continue to be hampered by the lack of an Education Minister and a Government, we will continue to press for decisions on the future of education to be taken within an equality and rights framework. We will continue to press for:

- an education system that delivers to disadvantaged areas, is non-selective, and promotes equality;
- that challenges 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;
- that protects and strengthens the work of classroom, nursery and special needs staff;
- that protects cleaning, catering and schools based staff against the threat of privatisation;
- that ensures that all staff in schools are employed on fair contracts;
- that stops plans to curtail Special Educational Needs services for pre-school children;
- that ensures 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. The funding of education is complex as are the governance arrangements. For this reason we summarise the funding system in our annual report for the benefit of branches and members.

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 2019 programme.

**Special Educational Needs:** The EA continues to pursue a strategic direction for the provision of services for children with special educational needs that is more focussed on managing austerity than promoting the best interests of the child. This is clearly shown by the leaked EA plans to close or merge seven of the ten special schools in the Belfast area to create three large 'super schools'.

Such a move would clearly not be in the best interests of children and will cause distress and concern for their parents and families. The approach proposed by the EA would force children with varied, complex needs who currently attend special schools into mainstream provision which is not capable of providing them with the support they require to realise their right to a high quality education under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The approach that has been taken by the EA here shows contempt for our members who work in special schools and only adds to the perception that EA consultation processes are not genuine.

Protecting special school provision will be a campaigning priority over the next 12 months. We continue to call on the EA to genuinely engage with the trade union movement in relation to special school provision across all age groups. We are demanding firm commitments that any new model around SEN provision will be supported by levels of funding that are responsive to growing demand and which result in the needs of all children being properly met, rather than diverting children into mainstream schools inappropriately. We have made it clear that we will firmly resist attempts to casualise the workforce. It is vital that the voices of the children affected and their parents are heard and acted upon.

**Area Planning:** We continue to monitor the Area Planning process during the 3 year cycle which began in 2017. 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 4 of the 8 existing statutory residential outdoor education centres, located at Bushmills, Ardnabannon, Killowen and Delamont. A fifth centre, Killyleagh, would move to self-catering suggesting a threat to those employed there.

As reported at last year's Council UNISON successfully opposed the closures given the negative impact this would have had on our members and the children and young people who benefit considerably from using them. In October 2017 the EA announced that the centres at Bushmills, Killowen and Killyleagh would 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.

Since these announcements, we have been assessing the implications for our members in the centres that are earmarked for development. We have also challenged the basis on which the EA has taken decisions during this process under the complaints procedures relating to the equality duty under section 75. Whilst the EA may claim that it has listened to the views expressed during consultation on the basis that 7 of the 8 statutory centres will remain open, this ignores the significant concerns that we have as to the sustainability and operation of the remaining centres, given the relatively small numbers of children

that access EOTAS in comparison to the many thousands of children that use outdoor education provision every year.



## Time for Change - UNISON Partnerships that make a difference

Over the past 18 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.

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 both care standards and our members' lives at work. It must help to secure their jobs; and it must create increased opportunities for frontline workers to have a voice in how quality care is delivered.



### ■ UNISON / Employer partnership training

UNISON's bespoke partnership training programme for managers and union activists is 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.

The training successfully kick-started our partnership initiatives with the Northern Trust and the NI Ambulance Service and is sustaining this work through transformational training and culture change initiatives.

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

The UNISON and the Northern HSC Trust project to improve service delivery and the working lives of domestic and catering staff at the Antrim Hospital site goes from strength to strength.

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.

Following the completion of the staff survey by 200 staff in 2017, a number of actions have continued during 2018 to improve the working lives and health of staff. For example:

- We have met with senior nursing staff to discuss better communications and recognising catering and domestic staff as key healthcare team members.
- Communications training was organised for supervisors to improve communications with the staff on the ground.
- Discussions are ongoing with Trust communications staff to identify methods to increase the profile of domestic and catering staff and the essential jobs that they do.
- It has been agreed that team meetings with domestic supervisors must take place once

a month with the opportunity for staff to put forward agenda items.

- Induction training time will be protected to ensure all staff have the skills to undertake work in all areas.
- We are organising staff information sessions on the content and application of Trust policies such as carer leave and special leave.
- We have established that domestic staff will have the opportunity to become BICS trainers.
- We developed a poster highlighting the importance of domestic staff reporting any concerns with regard to infection control, prevention and practice.



Further interventions will take place over the course of the project with final evaluation due to take place in 2019/20.

## ■ 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, health and wellbeing of NIAS staff — ambulance, emergency control, non-emergency control, HR and admin support.

A joint activist/management training session was held in September 2017 and the partnership was jointly launched by the Regional Secretary and Chief Executive in December 2017. To ensure that the views of staff inform everything that we do, a confidential survey was completed by over 200 staff late last year at a series of staff

meetings (rural and urban). This survey provided crucial information on how satisfied our members are with their job, and how this may be impacting on their mental health and stress levels.

Since then, the Project Steering Group has considered the survey results and the views of staff and will take forward a number of actions to:

- promote positive working and improve relationships & role respect between staff and managers;
- support staff to cope with the demands of their job;
- promote effective leadership, teamwork and communications;
- enhance the sense of personal control staff have over their jobs; and
- protect and improve the health & wellbeing of staff.

Initial activities will include:

- staff focus groups to identify issues of concern, improve relationships across staff groups, and identify potential better ways of working.
- a best practice template for team meetings will be developed, with staff engagement, to ensure they become an effective communications forum and an

effective way for staff to participate in decisions about the jobs they do.

- Management and staff skills development will be prioritised through seminars, events and training. These will initially focus on promoting effective leadership; good communications; the principles of partnership and the empowerment of women workers.
- In addition to encouraging current activities such as Peer Support, additional health and wellbeing initiatives will be developed to promote health & wellbeing, with a specific focus on good mental health.



Further interventions will take place over the course of the project with final evaluation due to take place in 2019/20.

## ■ Recently completed projects and projects in development

The **Western Area Care Home Project**, the **Southern HSC Trust Laundry Project** and the **Belfast HSC Trust Mental Health Project** reached their final stages in 2017 and we continue to intervene when required to sustain the positive workforce and service delivery outcomes achieved.



Future projects are under discussion with all Trusts to ensure that the best practice we have developed through this partnership process is transferred to other areas and disciplines.

What is clear is that prioritising the development of a healthy, satisfied and well-trained workforce is core to the future efficiency and effectiveness of health services and can be a win-win for UNISON, workers and the employer.

Belfast Trust has recently indicated a wish to revisit the original partnership on support services and we are due to meet in late Autumn.

# 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.

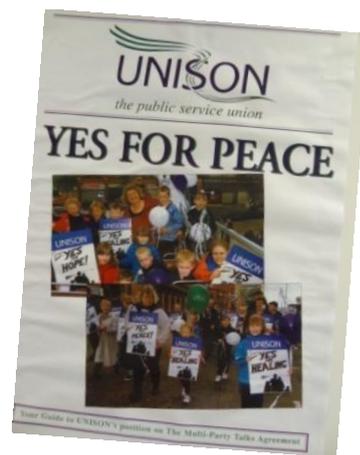
The absence of political will to embed equality and human rights commitments as a framework for Government led to the collapse of the Executive and Assembly. We have reported over the years our concerns on the roll-back on equality and human rights and its direct impact on our members' jobs, rights and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

**20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Good Friday Agreement:** April marked the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. On the day UNISON branches took part in significant events. On the morning of 10<sup>th</sup> April we sponsored a seminar organised with CAJ, the Equality Coalition, the Human Rights Consortium, Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement.

UNISON branches then participated in an ICTU demonstration at Stormont calling for the implementation of the rights and equality commitments made within the Agreement and a return to devolved Government within a framework of equality and human rights. We will continue to support our allies events during the Human Rights Festival in December.

The Peace Agreement has led to relative peace in NI in comparison to the years of conflict that preceded it. However, violence linked to the conflict remains a significant issue. Research published to coincide with its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary has found that since 1998, 158 people have died in what the PSNI describe as 'security-related killings' and that political violence remains a reality within post-conflict NI.

At NDC our delegates outlined the wide range of unimplemented commitments from our Peace Agreements and the clear attempt to 'roll back' from them in relation to equality and human rights. We outlined how the opponents of equality and human rights within NI are effectively given a veto on progress, as seen through the continuing opposition towards marriage equality, a women's right to choose, and the prevalence of weak or missing commitments to action in relation to promoting equality and human rights for all of the groups covered by section 75 of the NI Act 1998.



Our motion passed by UNISON NDC called on the NEC to support the NI region in its continuing campaign to protect the Peace Agreement and secure the full implementation of all outstanding commitments on equality and human rights. It further calls on the NEC to press the Labour party to take all actions necessary to protect the Good Friday Agreement, particularly in the context of the UK exit from the EU.

**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.

Although they have recently committed to remaining within the European Convention on Human Rights, the Tories have repeatedly stated a desire to repeal the Human Rights Act 1998. Its repeal would breach the terms of the Good Friday Agreement. Repeal of the Act and even the prospect of the UK leaving the Convention altogether, despite the Tory’s political commitments, becomes even more likely after an exit from the EU. 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 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 European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 removes the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights from the body of EU law that will be retained in UK law after the UK exits the EU. A second Act to implement whatever agreement may be reached with the EU is expected within the next 12 months and we will continue to fight to reinstate the Charter through this Act.



The Phase 1 Agreement reached between the EU and UK in December 2017 specifically recognises that EU law and practice has provided a ‘supporting framework’ in relation to rights and equality in NI and across the island of Ireland and states that the UK will not allow any diminution of rights as a result of exiting the EU. However we are growing increasingly concerned that in reality, rights will be diminished and that the UK wishes to limit the implementation of this part of the Agreement at the expense of workers’ rights and equality protections.

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. Its continued rejection by the UK Government (due to the lack of local political consensus) is particularly irresponsible at this point in the Peace Process. 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. We continue, with the support of the General Political

Fund, to sponsor research, seminars, public demonstrations and political lobbying to reverse regression and to move forward. We continue to develop the equality and human rights agenda with our allies in the Equality Coalition; the Human Rights Consortium; CAJ; NICRE and the Migrant Centre; and the Practice and Participation of Rights in particular, and report on key developments below.



## ■ 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 these are themselves umbrella groups and the largest 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.

Back in 1996, the Equality Coalition was instrumental in getting the 'Section 75' equality duty into the 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.

This year saw specific progress in the establishment of a new collaborative Equality Duty Enforcement Project, with a dedicated staff member sourced through external funding. This project relies on the existence of the Coalition network, as supported by

UNISON GPF, to identify, work with and capacity build in Equality Coalition member organisations to take enforcement action where the duties are not complied with. This action has already led to significant changes in the practice of key public authorities towards compliance with the duty.

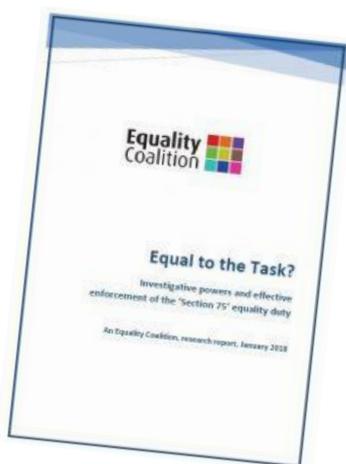


UNISON GPF is supporting the following additional core work of the Coalition.

**Exit from the EU:** As stated previously, an EU exit has enormous implications for rights and equality in NI. Further to our 2016 Brexit and Rights conference, the Coalition has been a key network partner in the BrexitLawNI partnership between Co-conveners CAJ and the law schools of the two NI universities. Among numerous other interventions, six reports have now been produced on the implications of Brexit for peace, equality, socio-economic rights and human rights

compliance in NI. The findings were launched in Brussels in June, and in Belfast in September 2018.

Feeding into this in February 2018 a major Equality Coalition conference was held in Co. Tyrone (which has enjoyed the highest levels of inward migration in NI) in partnership with UNISON, BrexitlawNI and the migrant NGO STEP on the Implications of Brexit for Migrant Workers. The Coalition has been particularly active campaigning in London, Dublin, Brussels and Stormont, providing briefings to parliamentary committees, meetings with senior politicians and officials and interventions in the legislative and policy process.



We have particularly focused on the issue of defending the Good Friday Agreement (including the citizenship rights provisions for equality among British and Irish citizens) including:

- the socio-economic rights of workers;
- ensuring that the 'hostile environment' measures are not further rolled out in NI;
- that public sector workers are not co-opted into immigration control functions given the problems of racial profiling. We are regular commentators in the media on these issues.

**Enforcing the equality duty and mainstreaming equality:** Working with our new Equality Duty Enforcement Project we have made a number of successful interventions that are leading to turning round the practice of many public authorities simply ignoring or paying lip service to the equality duty when taking decisions that affect socio economic rights. This work is

dependent on resources from the UNISON GPF to ensure active engagement of coalition members with the Project.

Interventions have included:

- **Welfare "reform" interventions:** We set up a collective working group to challenge the 'Two child rule' in NI. This has taken forward a number of interventions including work to progress the adoption by HMRC of a binding Equality Scheme, the work having uncovered that a scheme has been absent for over ten years. We challenged the failure of the department to Equality Screen on its rules for audio recording PIP assessments (which had obliged claimants to provide their own approved recording equipment) leading to changes in DfC processes. We have also worked on assisting campaigning against the closure of the Employers for Childcare Voucher scheme.
- **DUP-Tory Confidence and Supply Agreement:** We have pressed to ensure monies emanating from the deal are not used to circumvent equality duties to ensure fair allocation of funds. We have had a particular focus on infrastructure spend, city deals and the 'anti-deprivation' monies and have ensured that any proposals to spend the latter on a basis outside of objective need are now untenable.
- **Public funding by the Department of Communities:** We challenged numerous breaches of the Equality Scheme in specific funding programmes by the Department. This directly led to an Equality Commission investigation which upheld the breaches.
- **Rural needs:** We harnessed the interface between the new rural needs impact assessment duty and equality impacts, working with other coalition members to challenge cuts to rural affairs and transport funding, that were significantly mitigated.
- **NIO funding cuts:** A complaint to the NIO to funding cuts to the Human Rights Commission has hopefully resulted in changes in practice;

- **Public Transport:** We challenged the Department for Infrastructure for failure to comply with its equality scheme in a policy allowing private taxis in bus lanes. The policy has currently been abandoned.
- **Access to justice:** We submitted a complaint to the Ombudsman over the Equality Commission decision not to investigate the blocking of funding for the Lord Chief Justice legacy inquests unit. The resolution has involved changes to the Commissions investigations procedure that should make it more effective.
- **Council ban on Irish language bilingual street signage:** We facilitated several equality scheme complaints and assisted a judicial review that led to the withdrawal of the policy.
- **Electoral Office proposal to close district offices:** We challenged the failure to equality screen this proposal at an early stage and the lack of screening generally which should lead to a change of practice.

**Countering incitement to hatred:** We hosted a major conference at Queens University in October 2017 which presented the findings of Equality Coalition commissioned-research (UNISON funded) on countering incitement to hatred in NI. The conference was opened by the (former) Justice Minister Claire Sugden MLA, and featured contributions from coalition members focusing on the impact of the harms of incitement through racism, sectarianism, homophobia, misogyny, transphobia and disablism. It was addressed by international experts along with senior justice and PSNI officials. The Department of Justice are now taking forward a review of the legislation.

In May 2018 we held a follow up roundtable in UNISON to launch the final research report 'Incitement to hatred in NI' focusing on the role of non-justice bodies (Councils and other public authorities) and duties to intervene to remove items constituting incitement/hate expression and issues over funding. We and other members have subsequently engaged with public authorities, including the Housing

Executive, on policy change in this area that would better tackle incitement to hatred.

**Collective Activism and Solidarity:** The Coalition has taken an approach of maximising the impact of its interventions and those of its members in relation to policy development and implementation. In practice this has meant that in recent years we have moved away from the approach of large scale responses to formal policy consultation documents to much more of a tailored activist approach.



The strength of collective action is not to be trapped in a world of submissions, but rather to take an outcomes focused approach towards the major contentious policy questions of the day, using a range of methodologies including expert analysis of equality policy and practice, mobilisation of civil society organisations, and shaping power through high level lobbying and litigation. The issues the Coalition deals with are often highly 'politically' contentious within the context of a divided society, and where there is often an attempt to sectarianise issues and stigmatise groups working on them, we have worked on methods to counter this.

This has included collectively discussing distinct campaigns such as those around LGBT, reproductive rights and minority language rights; collective working groups on matters such as the 'two child rule', and seeking to ensure synergy in efforts for Westminster to legislate to remedy rights deficiencies, where the Assembly can or will not (as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement).

## ■ Conflict and dealing with the past

We reported last year on how progress on dealing with the past had stalled as part of the overall political crisis. Over the last 12 months, we have finally seen a public consultation take place on establishing the institutions set out within the Stormont House Agreement. We responded to this consultation process, endorsing the submission of the Model Bill Team - a Joint Project between Queen's University Belfast, the Committee on the Administration of Justice, and the Transitional Justice Institute of Ulster University.

UNISON membership encompasses victims and survivors of the conflict from all groups. The Peace Agreements commitment to address their issues was a key factor in their support for it. The current approach to dealing with the past and the legacy of the conflict is not working and in particular is not delivering for victims and survivors. We have called on the UK Government, Irish Government and all political parties to finally deal with a matter that is fundamental to peace and reconciliation in our society through enacting the series of measures within the Stormont House Agreement in a human rights compliant manner.

Whilst we agree with the conclusion of the Model Bill Team that these measures remain far from perfect, we share their concern that if this overarching package of measures is not

delivered, victims and survivors will have been failed once again. We have called on the Northern Ireland Office to accept the recommendations of the Model Bill Team and amend the Draft NI (Stormont House Agreement) Bill as necessary before it is laid before Parliament.



In particular, UNISON would highlight serious concern at the omission from these proposals of a pension for the seriously injured. We recently met with our colleagues in Wave, the campaigning survivor's organisation, and supported their call for a pension for the 500 survivors most profoundly affected with disabilities as a result of the conflict. We believe that this must be addressed within the legislation implementing the legacy mechanisms when it is brought before Parliament and will continue to press for these measures to be included.

## ■ Bill of Rights and Human Rights Consortium

**Bill of Rights:** The issue of a Bill of Rights moved up the political agenda in recent months as part of the ongoing talks process to restore devolution. We have also proposed that it would be a partial solution to the problems caused by Brexit. 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.



**Rights at Risk in Brexit process:** In January 2018 the Consortium launched a new report which highlights the inherent risks to the enjoyment of existing human rights in NI from the process of the UK leaving the EU. The report 'Rights at Risk – Brexit, Human

Rights and NI' is the product of extensive research by the Consortium with its members and civil society groups across NI. It outlines the breadth of the protections enjoyed by individuals in NI through current EU membership, how those protections are intimately linked to the Good Friday Agreement and why those rights are currently at risk within the Brexit withdrawal process.

**Submission to Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty:**

The UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty, Mr Philip Alston, will be visiting NI in November 2018. In advance of this visit he has asked for groups to send written submissions on a range of rights issues linked to extreme poverty in the UK. The Consortium's submission focuses on:

- the definitions of poverty;
- the lack of access to effective redress of UK economic and social rights violations;
- the continued need for a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights for NI;
- the enduring low employment rate in NI;
- the economic impact of Brexit on people living in poverty in NI;
- the economic uncertainty and instability in NI due to the current lack of clarity around the Brexit process;
- the all-island economy;
- the effect of recentralising power at Westminster on post-conflict confidence in NI;
- the risk Brexit poses to the Good Friday Agreement and human rights protections drawn from the EU.

**UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women:**

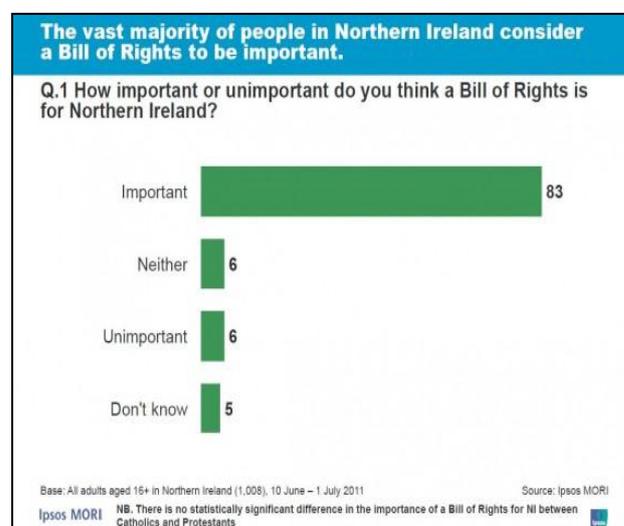
In June the Consortium sent its submission to this UN Committee in advance of the pre-sessional working group in July. The Consortium raised 4 key areas in its paper:

- the participation of the UK Government in UN human rights monitoring mechanisms;
- the continued need for a NI Bill of Rights;
- the importance of the Human Rights Act in NI and its particular role in protecting women's rights;

- the human rights implications of a UK withdrawal from the European Union, particularly for women.

**The Good Friday Agreement at 20:** On the anniversary of the Agreement the Consortium participated in a UNISON funded seminar to consider the opportunities and challenges civic society faces in realising the rights-based society envisaged within the Agreement.

**NI Human Rights Festival:** Each year the 10th December is celebrated as Human Rights Day across the world. The date marks the UN General Assembly's adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. Civil society groups across the world use this date as an opportunity to celebrate and mark the importance of human rights globally.



Every year a diverse range of organisations across NI have traditionally held events in the week surrounding this date to mark the occasion and highlight different aspects of human rights as they apply locally and internationally. The dates for this year's NI Human Rights Festival have been confirmed as 9-15 December. As with last year, the Consortium will invite groups and individuals to submit events to be included in the festival programme.

## ■ Participation and the Practice of Rights

UNISON NI continues to work in partnership with the Participation and Practice of Rights (PPR) organisation founded by Inez McCormack. Thomas Mahaffy, Head of Organising & Development represents UNISON on the Board. PPR works on social and economic rights issues and puts human rights principles and tools at the service of marginalised communities. Currently, PPR organises across the island of Ireland and with partners in Scotland.



**Housing4All:** PPR supported Housing4All (H4A), a group of asylum seekers, in building a partnership involving Choice Housing Association, East Belfast Mission and Community Foundation NI to provide 4 units of housing (privately owned) for destitute asylum seekers who have no recourse to public funds. It is the intention to evaluate this project and seek to replicate it elsewhere to prevent destitution among the asylum seeking community.

H4A have also held a series of clinics across Belfast to assist asylum seekers in reporting housing rights abuses to the Housing Executive and the UK Home Office. In August, PPR supported a group of Syrian families to highlight the poor housing conditions and services they have received since being housed in Belfast under the resettlement scheme. The report “We Came Here for Sanctuary” received media attention on both sides of the border.

**Equality Can't Wait:** Equality Can't Wait (ECW) continue to campaign for key land across Belfast to be zoned for social housing to address the homelessness crisis. In August, in association with HomesNow campaign, ECW worked with children living in hostels to launch a video and campaign highlighting the 20,950 children currently homeless or in housing stress. This video has been screened to the Housing Executive Board and Departmental officials. Key representatives from five political parties (Alliance, Greens, SF, SDLP and PBP) have taken part in a poster campaign which will be launched across

Belfast in October calling for social housing on the Hillview, Mackies, Sirrocco, Belfast Harbour and Glenmona sites. In conjunction with this campaign, over 100 residents across the city have taken part in human rights monitoring of housing and homelessness with the results due to be launched in late 2018.

**Homeless Action:** PPR, in partnership with the Simon Community NI, received funding from the Baring Foundation to mainstream a human rights based approach to addressing homelessness through self-organising among people experiencing homelessness and within Simon Community NI services. PPR organisers have worked with people staying in Simon Community hostels to carry out a human rights monitor of both services within Simon Community projects and the outcomes of government policy.



100 resident in hostels completed the monitoring and human rights indicators – monitoring whether outcomes improve. This will be launched in late 2018. PPR have also provided human rights (housing and social security) training for Simon Community NI staff and are planning to carry out frontline staff-led monitoring as well.

**Mental Health Rights Network:** PPR's mental health rights campaigns continue to take place in Belfast and across the north, with a focus on identifying issues in rural communities. Active campaigns include:

- **#UnFair Share** – the demand to increase the percentage of funding (8.5%) for mental health within the health budget.
- **#123GP** – proposals to provide responsive and effective mental health services at local GPs including ensuring that all GPs access their counselling

budget (only 2/3 currently do), mental health training for GPs, and mental health specialists accessible in every surgery. A petition with over 2,000 signatories was presented to the HSCB at their meeting in June including a letter signed by 50 organisations (GPs, counsellors and mental health charities) calling for the changes to be made.

- **SAFER** – a proposal to ensure that post-bereavement counselling support is provided automatically, instead of the current ‘opt-in’ procedure offered to families by the PSNI at the scene of the incident. Learning from a similar scheme in Australia, the campaign has engaged with the Coroner’s office to try and progress this important initiative and produced an information video which they have displayed to Policing Partnerships and allies to gain support.

#### Right to Work: Right to Welfare (R2W)

The *#PeoplesProposal*, which aims to use existing powers within the civil service decision making process to prevent destitution as a result of sanctions, has secured official support from 8 out of the 11 councils across NI. This has led to the Department for Communities implementing changes “in line with the People Proposals”, however these do not go far enough.

R2W members have carried out a human rights monitor of over 100 people accessing social security services at offices and assessments centres across Belfast. In September, a group member who had been sanctioned led a protest to the Department for Communities offices which resulted in the member’s benefits being reinstated. R2W will launch the findings of their monitoring in October 2018 at an event entitled *‘Conscious Cruelty: social security, the economy and human rights’* in the Spectrum Centre, Shankill Road. This will be the first of a number of events looking at progressive alternatives and complimentary initiatives to current social security provision including time-banking and universal basic income.

**Edinburgh Tenants Federation & Scottish Human Rights Commission:** PPR’s partnership with the Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) and Scottish Human Rights Commission on a project with tenants of a high rise complex in Leith, resulted in a £3m investment into run down towers and was completed in 2018. With funding from the Baring Foundation, PPR supported ETF to work with residents in sheltered accommodation to complete a human rights monitor involving 150+ residents. The report was launched on 9<sup>th</sup> October at Edinburgh City Council with the group of sheltered housing tenants leading. The approach in Edinburgh is to be profiled as a best practice example of participation by Scotland’s First Minister’s Advisory Group on Human Rights Leadership in December 2018.



**Travellers of North Cork:** PPR supported the Travellers of North Cork (TNC) to monitor accommodation conditions among 77 families and launched their results on 18<sup>th</sup> September in University College, Cork with a panel of experts including Colin Harvey and Virginia Bras Gomes (UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). TNC followed the launch up with a march on a vacant home in that Cork County Council have refused to allocate to a homeless Traveller family.

**Trade Union movement:** PPR continue to support other organisations to use a human rights approach including working with the UNISON Community and Voluntary branch on a monitor of workers conditions in the sector and assessing the impact of academic selection among teachers, parents and pupils with INTO.

## ■ Women at work and in society

**Discrimination against women:** The next stage of the UK Government examination by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) will take place in February 2019. There is unlikely to be a NI input to the UK Government report due to the collapse in devolution. However, as detailed elsewhere in the report we are involved with a range of organisations presenting evidence on the deficit in equality and human rights for women in NI.

As previously reported, Scotland and Wales have moved forward with legislation outlawing domestic violence and sexual abuse, and legislation on social and economic rights. In NI, 20 years of devolved Government has yet to produce a meaningful strategy on women's rights. 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 and the position of women in NI continues to fall far behind. 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 83% of UNISON NI membership.

Even though the UK Government will again be examined by CEDAW in 2018, previous CEDAW recommendations applying specifically to women in NI have yet to be implemented. However, the revitalised women's movement of which UNISON is a part, is rising to these challenges.

**Abortion:** Across GB women have abortion rights. Women in NI have none. On the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018 the people of the RoI took the historic decision to remove the 8<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution and bring forward legislation legalising abortion. On this date

women in RoI moved 150 years ahead of their sisters in NI where it is still a criminal offence.

UNISON has long championed women's reproductive rights and the demand for free, safe, legal abortion. As reported in Section 1 we have been part of the project of direct engagement of our members on abortion as a workplace issue. Through the women's movement and in particular Alliance for Choice, we have made the call for the UK Government to comply with its international human rights obligations and legislate now.



**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. This has been an historic year. We have celebrated the centenary of the suffragette movement with marches, seminars and social events. We have marked the role of women on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the civil rights movement and we have seen extraordinary change in the public attitude to abortion rights.

There is no doubt that the dangerous global shift to the right threatens women's rights everywhere. We have also been particularly active in delivering international solidarity to our sisters in parts of the world where they have virtually no rights at all. 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 2018:** In March 2018, UNISON hosted events in Galway House and other venues to mark International Women's Day and a strong UNISON delegation participated in the annual 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.

**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

Our regional Solidarity Group continues to grow with more branches electing international officers and taking part in the extensive range of Solidarity initiatives. In addition, our group members are deeply involved in other solidarity organisations such as Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUF), Justice for Colombia and the ICTU Global solidarity programme. One of our number, Stephen McCloskey is also the Director of the Center for Global Studies and our group is Chaired by Conor McCarthy from Royal Hospitals branch.

Throughout 2018 the group and other branch activists took part in seminars, conferences and public demonstrations including presenting at a fringe meeting at the NIC-ICTU Conference in April and at the ICTU Global Solidarity summer school in Derry in July 2018. NI branches also continue to

contribute to the main UNISON debate with motions to NDC.



In September 2018 we hosted the 5<sup>th</sup> annual joint region seminar with UNISON Scotland, UNISON North West and UNISON Northern. The event took place in Belfast over a weekend with an extensive programme and has been hailed as a particularly informative and successful event.

### ■ Cuba

We continue to work with the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. We have recently been notified that the Ireland Cuba Solidarity Campaign is being revitalised and we await further details. Following the successful visit of Aleida Guevara to the RVH last year, including the meetings with paediatricians

and medical students, Conor McCarthy is working on a potential twinning exercise. We also continue to press the leadership of the health system to seek the support of the Cuban health system to fill our increasing gap in doctors.

### ■ Palestine

**Trade Union Friends of Palestine:** UNISON Chairs TUF which is the ICTU recognised trade union solidarity organisation for Palestine. UNISON is also represented on the main TUF group and its steering group. The northern section of TUF has grown in strength and has

delivered some exceptional solidarity activity over the past 10 years. Our southern counterparts have been less successful but in October we attended a joint meeting in Dublin to re-establish joint working and to support

our colleagues in their mission to revitalise the southern section.

**Gaza:** The world witnessed as Israel behaved with impunity attacking the Great March of Return and killing women and children, journalists and health workers. Throughout the period of the Great March we participated in demonstrations every week at Belfast City Hall and also linked up by Skype with colleagues in Gaza. Alongside public protest, we engaged in lobbying both the UK and Irish Governments with our demand for international condemnation and intervention.

In August 2018, Dr Mona Al Farah, Director of the Middle East Children's Alliance and based in Gaza, presented to the ICTU Global Solidarity summer school on the plight of Gazan children. Through TUFPP we hope to be involved in a major conference on these children in 2019.

The Royal Hospitals branch again hosted the **Belfast Hill Walk in Support of Gaza**. The event, now in its 13<sup>th</sup> year, is part of the Feile 2018 programme and continues to raise funds for humanitarian aid for children in Gaza.

**TUFPP Ambassadors programme:** We now have a significant cohort of UNISON Ambassadors who have taken part in the visits to the Occupied Territories and who have returned to present at branch, regional and wider trade union events. The next delegation is scheduled for November 2018 and will include Fiona Barton, Aine Brennan, Susan Neill and co-ordinator Eamonn McMahon from UNISON.

**The European Trade Union Network:** UNISON continues to be the main union in the UK supporting the Network. It is growing in strength as unions from across Europe sign up to the Programme aimed at ending the preferential EU trade agreement with Israel and challenging the arms trade. The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual conference took place in Barcelona in May and the UNISON delegation consisted of

representatives from our region, the NEC international committee and our international department.

Down Education continues to play the key organising role for delegations of young Palestinians as part of the **Anti-racism World Cup**. As part of this event, individual activists from a number of branches hosted the young Palestinians in their homes and they performed at a special cultural event hosted by us in Galway House.



**Lobbying Government:** Through ICTU and TUFPP, we called on the Irish Government to strenuously intervene in the latest attack on Gaza and more recently on the attempt by the Israeli Government to restrict travel for the BDS Director Omar Barghouti. In July 2018 the Israeli Government confirmed to the world that it is an apartheid state by the introduction of its 'nation state' law. This move drew international criticism including from the EU, the Irish Government and a milder protest from the UK Government. However, no action has been taken to introduce sanctions.

UNISON's bargaining agenda includes our demand for implementation of the NIHRC 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.

## ■ Colombia

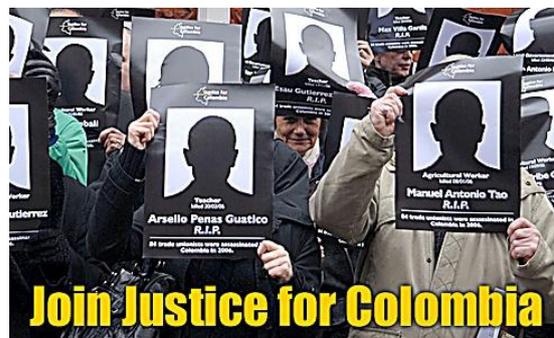
We continue to support Justice for Colombia and the trade union campaign challenging inequality, denial of human rights, and in particular the assault on trade unionists, human rights activists and peace activists. We also remain involved in the NI trade union cross-party initiative established by Justice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

At this year's Council meeting, Regional Committee will be reinforcing the need for our branches to re-affiliate to this important campaign. JfC trade union co-ordinator Nick MacWilliam attended our joint region's seminar in September and made a detailed presentation on the current precarious state of the Peace Process.

We continue to support all 4 main planks of JfC's work:

- Supporting trade unionists;
- Human rights in Colombia;
- Free political prisoners
- The Peace Campaign.

Regional Committee and our Global Solidarity Group are encouraging all UNISON branches to become involved.



## ■ Other global solidarity work

We continue to be involved in other global solidarity work through our Group, our self-organised groups and branches including:

- involvement in campaigns to support refugees and asylum seekers;
- support with humanitarian aid in zones hit by conflict or natural disasters;

- work on climate change and a sustainable environment
- the Clean Clothes Campaign and labour Behind the Label.

We have also recently re-affiliated to the Nicaragua Support Campaign.

## 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 the Standing Orders Committee. Table 16 sets out UNISON involvement in the Congress. The 2019 ICTU Biennial Conference is scheduled for Dublin in July.

**NICICTU Biennial Conference 2018:** The 2018 Biennial Conference was held in Derry in April. UNISON's 3 motions on delivering the promise of the GFA; 50 years of the civil rights campaign; and Congress input to phase 2 EU exit negotiations were extensively debated and carried unanimously. The UNISON delegation made significant contributions throughout the agenda. Patricia McKeown and Anne Speed were re-elected to the NI Committee. Roberta Magee presented at the fringe meeting on Palestine.

**Trades Councils:** Regional Committee continues to encourage UNISON activists to become involved in local Trades Councils which now play an important role in the Better Work, Better Lives campaign, particularly in the constituency lobbies of MLAs.

**May Day:** The 2018 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. With other unions we co-sponsored a photographic exhibition of trade union activism in the 1980s. Members turned out in large numbers to represent UNISON on the May Day march.

The aim of the ICTU 'Better work, Better Lives' campaign is to protect peoples' jobs and create new employment. UNISON members have participated in the lobby activity across the 18 Parliamentary constituencies and we are still seeking additional volunteers to become part of the campaign. ICTU has recently released an update on campaign activity and its plan for the next stage. We are encouraging members to use

the Better Work, Better Lives website and, in particular, to use the tools available to lobby MLAs and MPs. All participants in the campaign will be invited to attend a further ICTU event in early 2019.



**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. Our Policy Officer John Patrick Clayton is working with Congress to update its policy position paper on EU Exit for use in the coming weeks.

Table 16 - UNISON representation on ICTU structures

ICTU Structure and purpose	UNISON representation
ICTU Executive <sup>1</sup>	Patricia McKeown; Anne Speed
NI Committee, ICTU <sup>2</sup>	Patricia McKeown; Anne Speed
ICTU Equality & Human Rights Group <sup>3</sup>	Patricia McKeown
ICTU Standing Orders Committee	Denis Keatings
ICTU Women's Committee <sup>4</sup>	Margaret McKee and Danielle McCusker
ICTU Health Services Committee <sup>5</sup>	Anne Speed (Chair); Patricia McKeown; Joe McCusker; Brian Ferguson; Denis Keatings; Maura McKenna
ICTU Education TU Group <sup>6</sup>	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 <sup>7</sup>	Lee Chestnutt; Ricky Kennedy
ICTU Black and Minority Ethnic Committee	Patrick Yu
ICTU LGBT Committee <sup>7</sup>	Fidelma Carolan
ICTU Retired Members	Archie Thomson, Angela Boorman
ICTU Youth Forum <sup>7</sup>	Emer Kelly; Lorna McLarnon
ICTU Education Officers Group <sup>8</sup>	Fidelma Carolan
ICTU Health & Safety Committee <sup>7</sup>	Emma Jane Cullen; Ray Rafferty
ICTU Solidarity Committee	Kevin Hillick; Conor McCarthy; Eamon McMahan (TUFP)
ICTU Education alliance <sup>9</sup>	Anne Speed and nominated reps

1 Main policy making body – all island

2 Main policy making body for NI

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

4 Advisory Committee to NIC and jointly with Women's Committee RI to Executive Council on women's rights and participation

5 Main health policy committee for NI. Reports to NIC

6 Main education policy committee for NI. Reports to NIC.

7 Advisory Committee to NIC

8 Liaison group for all NI TU education officers

9 Campaign group on education policy in NI comprising TUs and affiliates.



Developing an efficient and effective union

# Finance & Managing Resources

## ■ Summary Accounts – Lay Activity Fund

The audited Regional accounts for the year ending 31 December 2017 have been distributed to all branches and delegates. The UNISON NI lay activity budget for 2017 was £103,070.72. The allocation for 2018 is £100,312.12, representing a 2.8% decrease on the previous year. 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 £3,282 was donated to projects through the following organisations:

- Rosemount House (President's Charity)
- Filipino Christmas Party
- SHIP
- Laganside Sinfonia
- Kerala Beats X 2
- Tar Isteach
- Cork Mother Jones
- Anti Racism world cup
- South Belfast Round Table (Party in the Park)
- ICTU historical event
- Clare Donnelly (childhood cancer)
- Christine Ferguson (in memory of Cameron)

The region affiliated to a total of 13 organisations in 2017/2018 at a cost of £2,481.

## ■ Branch finance

The majority of branches submitted their annual returns on time and within rule. The Community & Voluntary branch made a late return but was successful on appeal. BTS and Muckamore branches appealed on their failure to meet the minimum attendance at NDC 2017 but were unsuccessful. A number of NI branches were audited in 2017. 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.

## ■ Income and RMS

Total income returned to Head Office increased to £4,004,863. This represents a 4.5% increase on the previous year.

Total income returned to branches for 2017 increased to £981,915. This represents a 6.5% increase on the previous year.

## ■ Premises

**Galway House:** A business case has been submitted to the Finance & Resource Management Committee to fit out the vacant portion of Galway House and we await a decision. This will enable us to develop the UNISON College. We continue to host a series of events for lay structures,

partner organisations and external users. This has included:

- Four Seasons
- NI Migrant Centre
- NI Anti Poverty Network
- Royal College of OTs
- Participation in the Practice of Rights

**North West Support Centre:** The North West Support Centre in Derry continues to be the prime venue for UNISON branches in the North West. It is also the location for Derry Trades Council. Our most regular external organisation is the Derry Well Woman Centre. Other organisations booking the Centre include the Law Centre;

James Connolly Youth and the Open University. The NI Council for Racial Equality established the Migrant Centre and it continues to base its North West operation in the Support Centre as part of their partnership arrangements. Structural repairs continue.

## ■ Environmental sustainability

We continue to implement UNISON's Green Policy in the management of our premises and throughout our administrative systems. Our plans for the re-fit of Galway House includes sustainable environmental features which were not previously

available to us. We enhanced our recycling programme this year to ensure better separation of all waste types and we have significantly reduced the use of non recyclable plastic.

## ■ Administrative systems and front-line communication

**In-house systems and protocols:** The UNISON internal IT system is in continuous development as it adapts to meet our changing needs. The system still experiences downtime but we hope much of this will be resolved with the appointment of a new IT provider. The NEC took a decision some time ago to cease using Hewlett Packard as part of the BDS campaign. Consequently the hardware is being changed on a rotating programme. All staff are trained in IT health & safety requirements and operate accordingly.

**Websites and social media:** We continue to trend well on social media due to our range of campaigns and activism. We currently have 2,200 followers on twitter including members, NGOs, politicians, and the media. Facebook remains the most popular social media platform with 4,788 likes to the UNISON NI page, particularly in response to information from our welfare services, including school uniform and winter fuel grants; branch AGM dates; information on the May Day programme; the NJC pay claim; the 30<sup>th</sup> June NHS rally; and the week-long branch activity celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday of the NHS. In addition to UNISON specific information, we regularly use our social media pages and the website

to highlight partner campaigns such as the ICTU Better Work Better Lives campaign which we encourage members to use as a lobby tool.

The 'update your details' feature of the website 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 on-line for courses. The website also highlights our unique partnership programmes, our work on equality and human rights and our self-organised groups. A number of staff perform administrator functions on our social media platforms to ensure compliance with UNISON protocols, rules and values.

**E-communication with branches and members:** We continue to build our database of Email address and mobile phone / text numbers. Data is cleansed on an ongoing basis and we currently have 24,786 accurate email addresses covering 60% of the membership. We have tested the accuracy of our mobile phone data base which currently stands at 27,143.

**Distribution and print:** The Regional Centre continues to provide a service for branches and during 2018 circulated branch newsletters to all members during the AGM season.

## ■ Staffing

Regional Committee records its thanks to all our staff for all their work throughout 2017/2018.

Una NiMhearain, Area Organiser, leaves us on early retirement and we wish her well for the future. We are pleased to report that Caitlin NiCathail, Area Organiser now moves from part time to full time. Sharrona Loughins our Communications Assistant will shortly commence maternity leave and we send her best wishes. We have welcomed Seanine Currie providing

reception cover for Gemma Curran who is seconded as a Fighting Fund organiser. We thank Ciaran Graham who provided local organiser maternity cover working successfully on our migrant workers project.

**Fighting Fund and Organising Fund:** A range of branches individually, or in combination, made successful bids to the 2017/18 Fighting Fund enabling us to appoint 11 local organisers for the duration of the projects.

### Our current staff team is:

#### Administration

- Michele Bradford – Regional Administrator
- Tracy Bryson - Secretary (Part Time)
- Caroline Butler – Building maintenance and Catering
- Anne Campbell – Team Support
- Gemma Curran – Receptionist (PT) currently seconded
- Alison Downey – Receptionist (PT)
- Seanine Currie – Receptionist (PT) Fixed term cover for Gemma Curran
- Deirdre Graham – RMS Supervisor
- Shelly King - Secretary (PT)
- Roslyn McCartney – RMS Clerk
- Norma Neal - Secretary (PT)
- Brenda Peel – RMS Clerk
- Liz Robinson – Senior Secretary

#### Specialist Staff

- Sharrona Loughins – Communications Assistant
- John Patrick Clayton – Policy Officer

#### Regional Management Team

- Patricia McKeown – Regional Secretary
- Anne Speed – Head of Bargaining and Representation
- Thomas Mahaffy – Head of Organising & Development

#### Organising

- 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
- Susan Neill – Area Organiser
- Una NiMhearain – Area Organiser (PT)
- Caitlin NiChathail – Area Organiser
- Joe McCusker - Regional Organiser

#### Fighting Fund Local Organisers

- Noeleen Beattie
- Claire Bolt
- Deirdre Cousins
- Gemma Curran
- Sean Fairley
- Ciaran Graham
- Angela Gribben
- Jenny Johnston
- Orlaith McCarthy
- Alan McClean
- Janet Orr
- Noreen Robinson