

ANNUAL REPORT



The work of the
NI Regional Committee

2021 /22

Who's Who on the Regional Committee in 2021/2022

Joint Regional Convenors

Noreen Robinson	Classroom Assistant, St Catherine's PS, Strabane	5
James Large	Pharmacy Technician, Ulster Hospital, Belfast	5

Committee Members

Flora Alfante	Nursing Auxiliary, Craigavon Area Hospital	2
Olive Barry	Retired Members Forum	3
Aine Brennan	Medical Secretary, Mater Hospital, Belfast	5
Catherine Connell-Tierney	Theatre Assistant, Musgrave Park Hospital, Belfast	2
Gillian Ewart	Healthcare Assistant, Lurgan Hospital	1
Gillian Foley	Domiciliary Care Worker, SEHSCT, Newtownards	4
Jean Getty	Homecare Worker, Community Services, Magherafelt	4
Irene Graham	Nursery Assistant, Oldpark Nursery School, Belfast	5
Sonia Graham	Care Assistant, Ardview House, Downpatrick	1
Stephanie Greenwood	Higher Clerical Officer, Antrim Area Hospital	3
Omar Gunnoo*	Data Protection Officer, Inspire Wellbeing, Belfast	1
Kim Hall	Domestic Assistant, Causeway Hospital, Coleraine	5
Clair Hardy	Housekeeper, Causeway Hospital, Coleraine	3
Kevin Hillick	Caretaker, Poleglass Youth Club, Belfast	5
Daphne Hutchinson	Cleaner/Supervisor, Craigavon Senior High School	2
Mary Lyttle	Homecarer, Spruce House, L/Derry	4
Niall McCarroll	Deputy Manager, First Housing, L/Derry	2
Conor McCarthy	Radiographers Helpers, Royal Hospitals, Belfast	5
Martin McConnellogue	Manager, First Housing - Jefferson Court, L/Derry	2
Maura McKenna	Staff Side Officer	5
Catherine McKillen	Healthcare Support Worker, Royal Hospitals, Belfast	0
Roisin McKinley	Cook, Youth Justice Agency	3
Heather McKinstry	TU Side Officer, Education Authority, Armagh	4
Anne McVicker	Director, Women's Resource Development Agency, Belfast	4
Marie Meredith	Childcare Assistant, Ionad Uibh Gachach, Belfast	4
Alan Philson	Nurse, Ward 3, Waterside Hospital, L/Derry	5
Martin Philson	Support Services Assistant, Altnagelvin Hospital, L/Derry	4
Grant Preshur	Service Assistant, Ulster Hospital, Dundonald, Belfast	1
Rosena Robinson	Homecare Worker, Domiciliary Care Services, SEHSCT	1
Amanda Rutherford	Care Assistant, SEHSCT, Donaghadee	5
Amanda Sweetlove	Emergency Medical Technician, NIAS Headquarters, Belfast	1
Anne Taggart	Catering Assistant, Holy Child PS, Belfast	5
Marjorie Trimble	Disability Committee	4
Jill Weir	Ward Clerk, South West Acute Hospital, Enniskillen	5
Melanie Wright	Salaried Supervisor, Breda Academy, Belfast	1
Deborah Yapicioz	Social Worker, St Luke's site, Armagh	4

NEC Members in Attendance

Alastair Long	Ambulance Personnel, Larne Ambulance Depot	5
Margaret McKee	Catering Assistant, Royal Hospitals, Belfast	5
Catherine McKenna	Catering Assistant/Bus Escort - Holy Child PS, Belfast	5

*Resigned, July 2022

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Introduction

Confined and restricted by a virus, our members embraced the chance to march and demonstrate at the first opportunity. From our physical Regional Council in October 2021, they took to the streets in great numbers throughout the year on pay, the climate emergency, International Women's Day, May Day, the cost of living crisis and continually throughout the year on pay justice.

Our branches have returned to workplace meetings, banned during the height of the lockdowns. Most of our lay structures have returned to face to face meetings with hybrid support for vulnerable members and activists. Our Education Programme, through UNISON College NI, is back in the classroom but with strong online capacity extending our reach to members.

All of this activity has been exciting and intense, and proof that UNISON members have campaigning in their blood.

In this year's Annual Report, covering 2021/22, we present the work of our Regional Committee and all lay structures. It is a summary of an extraordinary workload, undertaken by members and activists who were at the frontline when the public needed us during the pandemic, and are still there in our crisis hit public services and in the midst of the cost of living crisis.

We welcomed the public support. We were rightly cynical about the praise from

politicians. When it came to decent reward and better rights at work, the praise was replaced by excuses.



2 years of Government, frustrated by vetoes, sharpened our own Manifesto as we challenged all candidates in the May 2022 NI Assembly Elections. The absence of Government since, simply strengthens our members' determination to keep challenging on the broken promises on pay justice, funding for public services, the failure to tackle growing poverty, child poverty and homelessness, and on the continual blocking of progress on equality and human rights.

The UNISON agenda has solutions. Many are set out in this report. We continue to relentlessly pursue them. As we present our Annual Report, Regional Committee pays tribute to the hard work of our members, activists and staff. At this year's Council we will also celebrate the contribution of those who are no longer with us.

We will not be pushed from the frontline to the breadline. Instead, WE RISE!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Patricia McKeown'.

Patricia McKeown,
Regional Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'James Large'.

James Large,
Joint Regional Convenor

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Noreen Robinson'.

Noreen Robinson,
Joint Regional Convenor

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 2021.

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 despite the many unprecedented challenges facing us over the period.

The UNISON NI Plan 2022

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.



OBJECTIVE 1: BUILDING OUR UNION





Recruiting and organising

Our recruitment and organising achievements in 2021 and 2022

Overview: This section reports on the progress of the Regional Committee recruitment and organising strategy to the end of 2021, and in 2022 to date.

The challenges posed by the pandemic continued to have a major impact on recruitment across the union during 2021/22 but in NI, the ongoing commitment and tireless activity of activists and staff across our union-building agenda at workplace, branch and regional level meant that we ended 2021 with 4610 new members – only 8% off our 5000 recruitment target.

This success has continued into 2022, and the majority of branches have benefited from a progressive return to more traditional face-to-face recruitment, organising and member engagement activities – although many still face significant restrictions and challenges.

Where direct access remains a problem, outdoor stalls, regional and branch communications, and other innovative organising work continue to be used for successful recruitment and member engagement activity. Our strategy and some of our achievements are summarised below.

UNISON NI Recruitment Strategy 2022



Achievements



Regional Committee Recruitment Strategy:

Our Strategy is on track to deliver above target recruitment in 2022. It focuses on:

- ensuring that branch plans prioritise recruitment, organising, bargaining, campaigning and member engagement activities – including effective mapping;
- maximising the use of regional and branch communications and social media to publicise our successes and increase our visibility as the go-to union for workers needing protection, support and advice;
- ensuring we continue to identify and target new workers across all sectors;
- progressing special organising initiatives for specific groups such as student nurses, and in priority growth areas such as social care;
- prioritising our UNISON College NI as a key recruitment tool through innovative hybrid (physical/online) delivery, member engagement and support;
- progressing effective retention strategies, including a phone bank to make direct contact with new online joiners;
- ensuring that best practice recruitment initiatives are shared across branches;
- recognising that effective union building activity at branch level is directly linked member engagement, participation and effective branch governance and administration.

Our key challenge remains to identify, recruit and train more stewards, and our staff team will continue to support branches to initiate a programme of physical and online meetings to support their election and re-election, and to increase cover across all areas and workplaces.



RMS and central processing: Our RMS team play a vital role in the Plan - maintaining centralised processing and databases in partnership with all branches, mapping for joint branch assessments and undertaking major data cleansing exercises in preparation for pay ballots. Following success with the BSO in health and the Education Authority, the project continues to sign up other employers to agree a mechanism for transferring online joiners from direct debit to DOCAS.

RMS has conducted an extensive exercise on employers in health, education and the community & voluntary sector to ensure proper allocation of members to branches and service groups. Members misallocated in error are being reallocated to the appropriate branch and service group. Where further discussions are necessary (for example, to clarify organising and negotiating history, or the employer's commissioning or funding arrangements) meetings will be organised with the relevant branches.

Section 2 and Section 3 of this report outline the many bargaining issues and campaigns that have encouraged more workers to join UNISON and that have also expanded our role on community activism.

Some activities and campaigns that have secured membership increase in 2022

- Our pay campaigns in health, education and for a real living wage across all sectors
- Challenging privatisation, unsafe staffing, job relocations and service closures
- Public policy campaigns across sectors to advance the position of our members, their families and communities, including our Free School Meals for All campaign
- Challenging the roll-back on workers' rights, attempts to bypass direct engagement with us, and failure to produce equality and human rights impact assessments
- Negotiating on health & safety issues such as risk assessments and effective use of PPE
- 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 campaigns on the impact of EU exit

■ Our recruitment achievements in 2021

Table 1 and Fig. 1 shows that, despite ongoing pandemic restrictions, 2021 was another successful year for UNISON NI, with recruitment of 4610 new members. 10 branches ended the year in growth, with the minimal retraction in other branches primarily a result of ongoing limitations on normal recruitment and organising activity.

UNISON NI ended 2021 with 4610 new joiners, a total full membership of 44,423, and had grown by 15% since end Dec 2016.

The following section analyses current branch growth rates and membership trends in more detail.

Fig 1 - Recruitment, growth and membership trends, 2021



Table 1– UNISON NI recruitment and growth by branch, 1 Jan 2021 to 31 Dec 2021

Branch	2021 Recruitment					Growth Trends		2020 Total joiners
	Target	Total	(Jan to Sept)	(Oct to Dec)	% target met	2021 (No. joiners minus leavers)	Dec 2016 to Dec 2021 (%)	
Belfast City Hospital	313	104	81	23	33%	-57	↑4%	135
Belfast Education	150	220	139	81	147%	-18	↑25%	417
Causeway	170	142	114	28	84%	-78	↑7%	189
Comm & Voluntary	200	306	246	60	153%	-42	↑22%	475
Craigavon Health	140	243	185	58	174%	-22	↑18%	175
Derry Education	150	152	61	91	101%	+4	↑40%	159
Down Education	150	141	91	50	94%	+16	↑15%	208
Down Lisburn	300	299	226	73	100%	+19	↑22%	375
Foyle	300	281	200	81	94%	-39	↑28%	311
Greenpark	110	84	52	32	76%	0	↑11%	68
Health Agencies	50	22	18	4	44%	-20	↓17%	45
Mater Hospital Trust	100	50	39	11	50%	-90	↓8%	55
N&W Belfast Health	162	243	184	59	150%	+19	↑16%	271
NEELB	150	127	68	59	85%	-9	↑32%	254
Newry & Mourne	200	127	105	22	64%	-70	↑11%	130
NI Ambulance	85	78	61	17	92%	+6	↑18%	66
NI Blood Transfusion	12	6	6	0	50%	-1	↑27%	7
Northern Health	600	417	303	114	70%	-238	↑8%	571
Omagh & Fermanagh	240	151	115	36	63%	-12	↑8%	211
Orchard	160	274	210	64	171%	+5	↑21%	256
Rathgael	15	3	0	3	20%	+3	↓29%	4
RVH & Muckamore	463	351	243	108	76%	+5	↑21%	250
South & East Belfast	200	243	177	66	122%	+9	↑7%	231
Southern Education	100	50	34	16	50%	-51	↑7%	106
Sperrin Devenish	80	70	47	23	88%	-23	↑51%	75
UCHT	300	400	280	120	133%	+95	↑48%	420
UU Coleraine Magee	40	3	2	1	8%	-10	↓2%	6
UU Jordanstown	50	23	14	9	46%	-12	↓5%	17
Total	5000	4610	3301	1309	92%		+15%	5487

■ Our recruitment achievements in 2022 to date

Table 2, details:

- branch recruitment targets;
- recruitment activity from 1 January to 30 September 2022;
- online recruitment as a % of total branch recruitment;
- 2022 growth trends (the number of new joiners minus leavers) to 30 September;
- 5 year growth trends in full membership between 31 Dec 2017 and 30 Sept 2022.

Recruitment: During 2022 UNISON NI has grown to 44,665 full members and we remain the largest union in NI. Table 2 shows that between 1 Jan and 30 Sept 2022:

- 4536 new members have been recruited across branches to date. This is 21% above our end September target and 37% more than the 3301 we recruited during the same period in 2021;
- 11 branches have already met their yearly target in only 9 months with Belfast Education at +177% of target, Derry Education at +163%, and Orchard at +152% of target;
- The 3 branches who have recruited the highest number of new members to date this year are Northern Health (+488 new joiners); UCHT (+327); and RVH & Muckamore (+298).

Growth: We are in steady growth with 154 more joiners than leavers in the year to date. Table 2 shows that between 1 Jan and 30 Sept 2022:

- 19 branches are currently in growth with more joiners than leavers;
- the 3 branches with the most positive growth are Down Education (+88 more joiners than leavers); Derry Education (+83), and North & West Belfast Community (+47).

5-year growth trends: Table 2 and Figures 2-6 (page 11) looks at our growth over a 5 year period. It shows that since 31 December 2017:

- we have grown as a region by 16% - up from 38,565 in Dec 2017 to 44,665 to 30 September 2022;
- a total of 23 branches have grown;

- our education branches have grown very significantly, including Derry Education (+39%), Down Education (+29%), Belfast Education (+27%), Sperrin Devenish (+27%);
- the 18 health branches remain in sustained growth, including NIBTS (+44%), UCHT (+33%), Foyle (+23%) and Down Lisburn (+17%);
- despite major funding problems, community and voluntary sector membership has grown by 20%;
- branches that more fully utilised the Fighting Fund between 2017 and 2020 have, in general, higher growth over the 5 year period.



Online joiners: Table 2 shows that during the year, 71% of our new joiners joined online. This is a decrease from the 80% who joined online last year and reflects the gradual return to face-to-face direct recruitment across branches. It is similar to the online recruitment figure for 2020 (71%) but still well above that recorded in 2019 (43%).

Table 2 shows that the highest proportion of online joiners continue to come primarily from branches with a membership spread over a wide geographic area such as the C&V sector branch (92% online joiners), or those with a wide range of community services such as South & East Belfast (90%). The lowest proportion come from our University branches and our single site health branches such as the Mater Hospital (43%) and Belfast City Hospital (53%).

The biggest drop in online joiners were evident in Northern Health (down from 95% in 2020/21 to 62% this year), Foyle Health (down from 87% to 66%) and some of our education branches such as Belfast

Education, Derry Education and Southern Education with drops exceeding 10% points each. This reduction again reflects the success of direct recruitment activities and the collection of physical forms across these branches.

The level of stewards cover in an employer has a direct relationship to levels of online joining with our new communications strategies supporting direct recruitment in these often harder to reach areas.

Following our success with BSO last year, we continue to get new employers to sign-up to our project which offers new joiners the option when joining online of paying by either Direct Debit or DOCAS. Our agreement

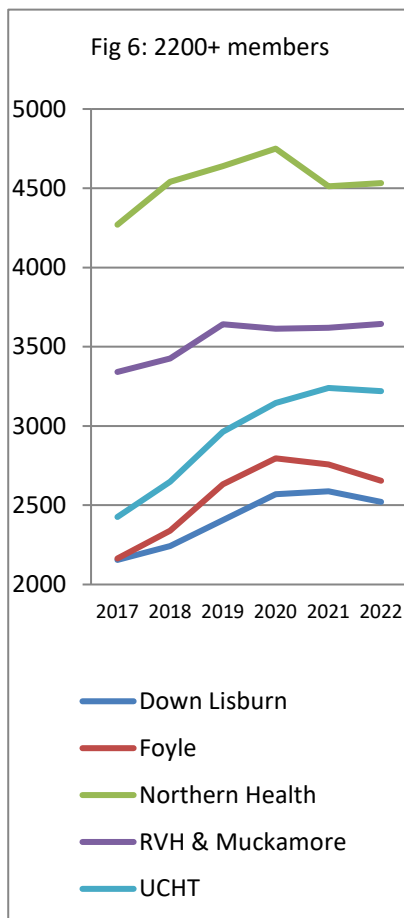
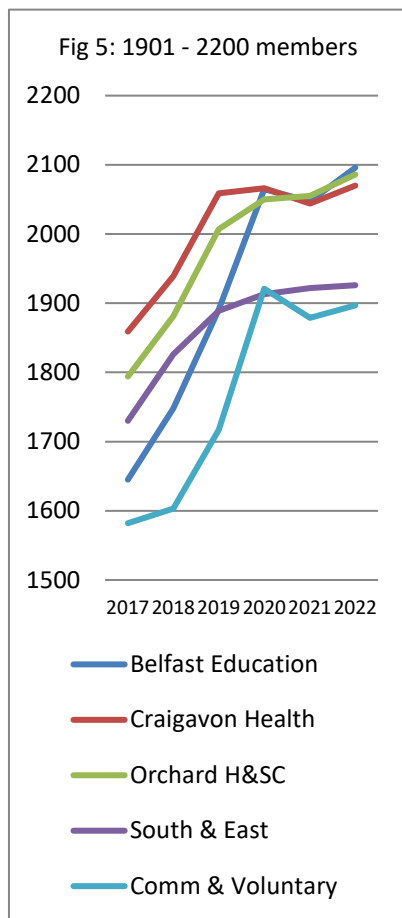
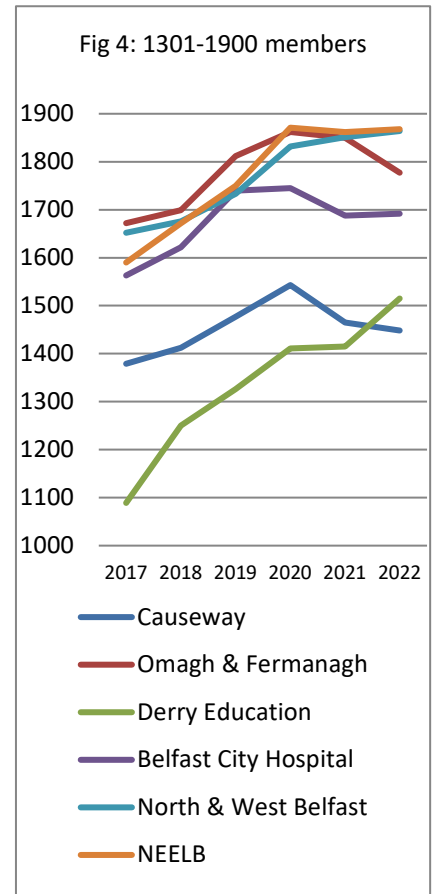
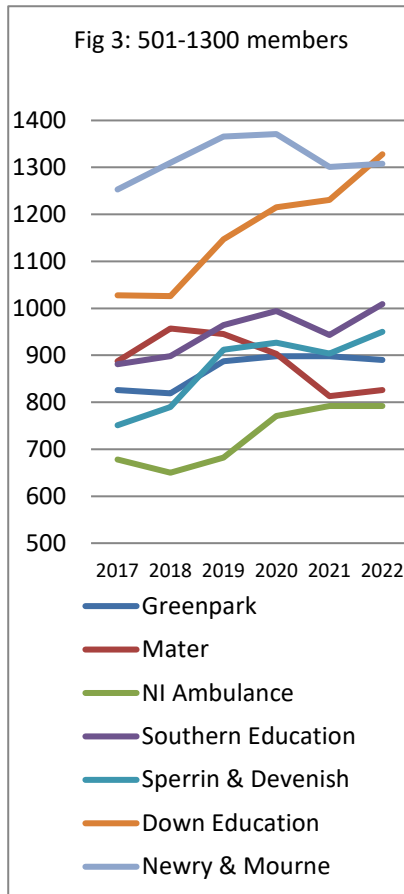
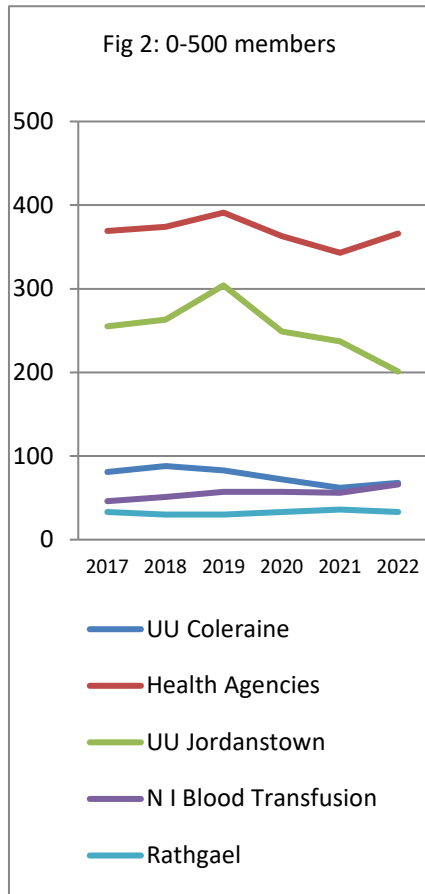
with BSO in health and social care covers 57% of our membership and we have now finalised agreement with all 5 Education Authority offices (covering 16% of our membership). Our project continues to contact all new online joiners by telephone to welcome them to UNISON, check their details and refer any issues to their branch.



Table 2 – UNISON NI recruitment by branch, 1 Jan to 30 Sept 2022

Branch	Recruitment to date, Jan-Sept 2022					Growth trends	
	Target	Total	% online joiners	No. to reach target	% of target met to date	2022 to date (No. joiners minus leavers)	31 Dec 2017 to 30 Sept 2022
Belfast City Hospital	313	135	53%	178	43%	-16	↑13%
Belfast Education	150	265	77%	Target met	177%	+27	↑27%
Causeway	170	119	64%	51	70%	+12	↑5%
Community & Voluntary	200	247	92%	0	124%	+30	↑20%
Craigavon Health	140	185	59%	Target met	132%	+1	↑11%
Derry Education	150	245	50%	Target met	163%	+83	↑39%
Down Education	150	153	67%	Target met	102%	+88	↑29%
Down Lisburn	300	240	80%	60	80%	-52	↑17%
Foyle	300	207	66%	93	69%	-105	↑23%
Greenpark	110	65	58%	45	59%	+5	↑8%
Health Agencies	50	41	78%	9	82%	+13	0%
Mater Hospital Trust	100	63	43%	37	63%	+17	↓7%
N&W Belfast Health	162	221	79%	Target met	136%	+47	↑13%
NEELB	150	195	82%	Target met	130%	-2	↑18%
Newry & Mourne	200	147	67%	53	74%	+7	↑4%
NI Ambulance	85	58	79%	27	68%	-56	↑17%
NI Blood Transfusion	12	12	42%	0	100%	+9	↑44%
Northern Health	600	488	62%	112	81%	+21	↑6%
Omagh & Fermanagh	240	136	69%	104	57%	-60	↑6
Orchard	160	243	81%	Target met	152%	+36	↑16%
Rathgael	15	0	0	15	0%	-2	0%
RVH & Muckamore	463	298	63%	165	64%	+16	↑9%
South & East Belfast	200	221	90%	Target met	111%	+4	↑11%
Southern Education	100	108	76%	Target met	108%	+59	↑15%
Sperrin Devenish	80	97	62%	Target met	121%	+40	↑27%
UCHT	300	327	79%	Target met	109%	-30	↑33%
UU Coleraine Magee	40	12	17%	28	30%	+4	↓16%
UU Jordanstown	50	8	38%	42	16%	-20	↓21%
Total	5000	4536	71%	464	91%	+154	↑16%

Branch growth trends, 2017-2022



The charts on this page show growth trends across branches from 31 December 2017 to 30 September 2022.

Patterns of growth or retraction over this period are also identified in the final column of Table 2.



Recruitment achievements across key sectors, employers and membership groups

Table 3 details recruitment across our 5 key sectors of membership, and the main employers they work in. It also shows how many women and young members we have recruited this year.

In 2022 to date, we have recruited 2211 new members in the **health & social services sector** (excluding the private sector). This is 26% higher than the 1757 health and social care workers we recruited in the same period last year. As a proportion of total recruitment, 49% of our new joiners in 2022 are from this sector. This is markedly lower than the 54% recruited during the same period last year, and the 51% recruited to the end of 2021. It is, however, well up on the 43% recruited during 2020.

Recruitment primarily comes from the 5 large Health & Social Care Trusts with Belfast Trust the highest recruiting employer with 550 new joiners. Health & safety, workplace return, bargaining wins and job relocation issues continue to be major contributing reasons for joining. As a result of continuing reorganisation of health services post-Covid, work continues:

- to properly locate or relocate the membership in the relevant branches;
- to identify further outsourcing / privatisation;
- to review the current state of health service workforce planning;
- to challenge inconsistency between the workforce figures held by the Department of Health and those held by the 6 Trusts;
- to determine what health service functions are now being replaced by the third sector or the private sector, without recourse to proper procurement procedures.

In 2022 to date, we have recruited 960 new members in the **education sector**. This is 140% higher than the 399 education workers we recruited during the same period last year. As a proportion of total recruitment, 21% of our new joiners in 2022 are from this sector. This is markedly higher than the 12% recruited during the same period last year, and the 15% recorded to the end of 2021. It is similar, however, to the 20% recruited in the education sector during 2020.

Recruitment in this sector has benefited from the return to face to face recruitment activities, school visits and members' meetings. Recruitment primarily comes from the controlled sector, with 871 new members (91%) employed by the Education Authority.

In 2022 to date, we have recruited 247 new members in the **community & voluntary sector**. This is similar to the 246 workers we recruited during the same period last year. As a proportion of total recruitment, 6% of our new joiners in 2022 are from this sector. This is lower than the 7% recruited during 2021, and the 9% recruited during 2020. The highest number of new joiners this year (37) are employed by Apex Housing.



As in other sectors, we continue to deal with the impact of service changes post-pandemic, in addition to the additional pressure of ongoing funding cuts, the impact of vacancies resulting from pay issues, and EU exit.

Our membership in the **private sector** includes private homecare, contractors and private nursing/residential care homes. Recruitment remains high, with 1087 new joiners during 2022 to date. This is 25% more than the 872 private sector workers we recruited during the same period last year. As a proportion of total recruitment, 24% of our new joiners in 2022 are from this sector. This is lower than the 27% recruited during 2021, and the 26% recruited during 2020.

Poor terms and conditions continue to produce higher than average attrition rates in the sector but the allocation of additional organising resources from the Branch Support and Organising Fund should support increased recruitment in the year ahead. Following the withdrawal of Four Seasons, recruitment in the sector has primarily come from Healthcare Ireland Group with 79 new joiners this year.

The proportion of **young people** (26 and under) joining us remains high, with 958 recruited in 2022 to date. As a proportion of total recruitment, 21% of our new joiners this year are 26 and under. This is lower than the 24% recruited during the same period last year and the 25% recruited during 2020. Our challenge remains to grow the next generation of union leaders.

During 2022, only 76% of all new joiners are **women**. As a proportion of total recruitment, this is markedly lower than our overall full member breakdown of 83% women; and is lower than the proportion recruited during 2021 (80% women) and 2020 (89% women). This is the subject of further analysis to be presented to Regional Committee in 2023.

Table 3 - UNISON NI recruitment by sector, employer and equality group, 1 Jan to 30 Sept 2022

Membership sector & highest recruiting employers	Recruitment			
	Jan-Sept 2022	Jan-Sept 2021	Total 2021	Total 2020
Health and social services (exc. private sector)	2211 (49%)	1757 (54%)	2371 (51%)	2413 (43%)
• Belfast HSC Trust	550	482	691	599
• South Eastern HSC Trust	327	311	439	410
• Southern HSC Trust	312	311	408	356
• Northern HSC Trust	310	175	251	239
• Western HSC Trust	170	168	244	284
• NIAS	50	54	68	64
Higher education	17 (<1%)	26 (<1%)	26 (<1%)	42 (<1%)
Education & other NJC	960 (21%)	399 (12%)	671 (15%)	1114 (20%)
• Education Authority – Western	327	77	186	172
• Education Authority – Belfast	195	72	112	263
• Education Authority – North Eastern	150	52	111	199
• Education Authority – South Eastern	127	68	99	167
• Education Authority – Southern	72	25	39	81
Community & Voluntary	247 (6%)	246 (8%)	302 (7%)	475 (9%)
• Apex Housing Association	37	16	25	34
• Inspire Wellbeing	18	28	32	29
• Radius Housing Association	16	5	5	10
Private sector (inc. homecare, contractors,	1087(24%)	872 (27%)	1240 (27%)	1443 (26%)
• Healthcare Ireland Group	79	25	31	41
• Beaumont Care Homes Ltd	46	-	-	-
• Balmoral Healthcare Agency	44	24	40	28
(Young members – 26 and under)	958 (21%)	774 (24%)	1081 (23%)	1352 (25%)
(Women)	3451(76%)	2653 (82%)	3677 (80%)	4859 (89%)
Total	4536	3248	4610	5487

Recruitment achievements across key occupational groups and job roles

Table 4 shows that in the year to date, we have increased the number of new joiners across the majority of occupations and job roles when compared to the same period in 2021. In particular, it shows that during 2022:

- we have had a marked increase in the number and proportion of **Admin/P&T** workers recruited; and
- we have had a marked decrease in the proportion of **social service/social care** workers joining us as a proportion of total recruitment during the year.

The 1497 new **Admin/P&T** workers recruited during 2022 to date is 59% higher than the same period last year (942 new joiners). As a proportion of total recruitment, 33% of our new joiners in 2022 are Admin/P&T workers. This is higher than the 29% recruited during the same period last year and the 31% recruited to the end of 2021. However, it is lower than the 35% recruited from this group in 2020.

Growth in this sector was driven by a very significant increase in the recruitment of **classroom and nursery assistants**. 664 have been recruited during 2022 to date - up 153% from the 262 recruited during the same period last year. 15% of our total recruitment during 2022 to date have been classroom or nursery assistants, compared with only 8% during the same period last year. This again reflects the significant increase in recruitment across our education branches during the year to date.

1047 new members (23% of all new joiners) work in **social service/social care** roles. This includes 319 **support workers** (7% of all new joiners); 399 **care assistants** (9% of all new joiners); and 272 **homecare workers** across HSC Trusts and the private sector (6% of all new joiners). As a proportion of total recruitment, the 23% recruited from social services/social care roles in the year to date is markedly lower than the 29% recruited from these roles during the same period last year. It is also lower than the 28% recruited to the end of 2021 and the 31% recruited during 2020.

1367 new members work in **nursing** roles across all sectors. This is a marked 45% increase in the number recruited to this date last year (941). As a proportion of total

recruitment, 30% of new joiners are employed in nursing roles, similar to the 29% recruited during the same period last year but markedly more than the 27% recruited during the whole of 2021 and the 22% recruited during 2020. The 2022 recruitment figure includes 586 **nurses** (13% of all new joiners) and 346 **health/nursing assistants** (8% of all new joiners).

625 new members (14% of all new joiners) work in **support services** across all sectors. This includes 268 **cleaners/domestics** (6% of all new joiners), and 222 **catering workers** - 5% of all new joiners. The number and proportion of new catering staff recruited is well up on the 85 recruited last year (only 3% of new joiners).

As a proportion of total recruitment, the 14% of new joiners recruited from support services roles is similar to the proportions recruited during 2021 (14%) and 2020 (13%).



Table 4 - UNISON NI total recruitment by key occupational group and job roles, 1 Jan to 30 Sept 2022

Occupational group and job roles	Recruitment			Total 2020
	Jan-Sept 2022	Jan-Sept 2021	Total 2021	
Admin/P&T – all sectors	1497 (33%)	942 (29%)	1423 (31%)	1906 (35%)
• Classroom & nursery assistants	664 (15%)	262 (8%)	468 (10%)	656 (12%)
• Admin & clerical	435 (10%)	336 (10%)	460 (10%)	607 (11%)
Social services/social care – all sectors	1047 (23%)	970 (29%)	1289 (28%)	1706 (31%)
• Support workers	319 (7%)	328 (10%)	429 (9%)	594 (11%)
• Care assistants	399 (9%)	338 (10%)	445 (10%)	539 (10%)
• Homecare workers	272 (6%)	256 (8%)	354 (8%)	430 (8%)
Nursing – all sectors	1367 (30%)	941 (29%)	1237 (27%)	1193 (22%)
• Nurses	586 (13%)	490 (15%)	680 (15%)	620 (11%)
• Health/Nursing assistants	346 (8%)	271 (8%)	366 (8%)	347 (6%)
Support services – all sectors	625 (14%)	448 (14%)	661 (14%)	682 (12%)
• Cleaners/Domestics	268 (6%)	177 (5%)	263 (6%)	254 (5%)
• Catering workers	222 (5%)	85 (3%)	145 (3%)	204 (4%)
Total	4536	3301	4610	5487

The success of our special recruitment and organising initiatives

Social care: The social care sector in NI has a high staff turnover and remains our most difficult organising challenge due to a dispersed and fragmented membership in hundreds of often hostile employers.

In recognition of this challenge, we are currently participating in a UNISON-wide Organising and Recruitment Strategy Development (ORS D) project and have agreed to pilot a new Strategic organising within social care campaign. This will be launched in the Autumn with a view to recruiting more members; electing more stewards; organising the workforce; and securing new bargaining arrangements and recognition within private sector homecare employers and private nursing and residential care homes.

This new campaign will align with our existing social care strategy which has the additional objectives of halting further privatisation from the NHS to the private sector; and, ultimately, returning privatised services back in house. It is also essential to ensure that the membership are properly serviced within our structures.



Regional Committee will further support our members in both the public and private social care sector through:

- the allocation of Branch Support and Organising Fund (BSOF) resources;
- maximising our communication reach, including regular bargaining and policy updates; and
- a renewed programme of members meetings to establish networks across employers and geographic areas, and to support the election or re-election of stewards.

We are the largest union organising in **private sector homecare** and the potential for recruitment remains huge. Table 5 shows that to date 124 private sector homecare workers have been recruited to date this year and we now have a total of 1341 members in the

sector, across 44 companies. This sector represents 3% of our total membership.

The bargaining challenges associated with **public sector homecare** are detailed in Section 2 of this report and Table 5 shows that, in total, 148 public sector homecare workers have been recruited this year to date. We currently have a total of 2071 across the 5 HSC Trusts. This sector represents 5% of our total membership.

Similarly, we are the largest union organising in the **private nursing and residential care home sector**. Table 5 shows that 456 members have been recruited in private nursing homes and residential settings in the year to date and we now have a total of 3418 members in the sector, across 201 companies. This sector represents 8% of our total membership.

This sector, in particular, has a higher proportion of migrant workers than the general workforce and recruiting and organising them remains a UNISON priority. Both EU nationals and other migrant workers continue to face major employment issues associated with their employment status, immigration policies, racism and discrimination. With an estimated 20,000+ staff working in hundreds of (mainly private sector) nursing and residential homes, the potential for recruitment remains huge.

The utilisation of BSOF resources should result in a marked increase in recruitment in social care during the project period and will be monitored by a reconvened Social Care Steering Group.

Despite ongoing difficulties with delayed courses, staggered introductions, and some restrictions on traditional freshers events, very successful physical **student nurse recruitment** events took place in Queens and Magee during 2022. We also engaged with potential new student members through a number of activities including:

- hosting a series of online sessions about the benefits of joining UNISON;
- offering CPD courses on hundreds of different topics through the UNISON College NI, including free access to all of our members to nursing times with 30 clinical e-

- learning modules and 100s of journal articles;
- sending out an email (via HQ and UCAS) to social work students.

In total we have recruited 428 new student nurses during 2022 to date. This is significantly more than the 190 recruited during the whole of 2021 and the 175 recruited during 2020.

Student nurse recruitment is led by Area Organiser Susan Neill, and we continue to participate in a union-wide project to identify the most positive, attractive route to engage, recruit and retain student healthcare members in the face of competition from other unions. In total we have 669 student nurse members.

Our new initiative in **Integrated schools** is focused on recruiting new members and activists; and delivering recognition, facilities and collective bargaining agreements to improve pay and terms and conditions in the sector. To date 44 staff have been recruited in the year to date and we currently have 353 members in the sector across 28 schools. It is planned that a BSOF Local Organiser will support recruitment and organising in the non EA workforce, including in the integrated, voluntary grammar and Irish medium sectors.

Other activity and success: As part of the Regional Committee strategy we target a wide variety of other sectors and occupational groups with bespoke communications and recruitment materials; targeted telephone contact; and the organisation of online member meetings to identify key issues and potential new stewards. Some of this additional activity is outlined below.

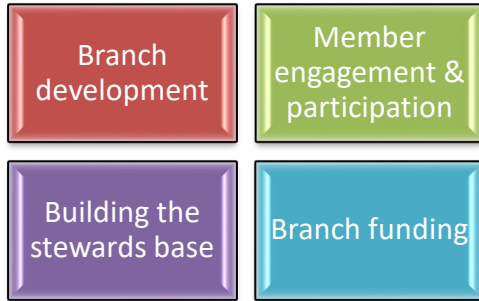
- We recruited 80 new members in doctors' and dentist surgeries and private day-care setting this year – a marked increase from the 42 in the same period in 2021.
- We continue to identify new entry points, and opportunities for engagement and recruitment of newly employed staff and former members.
- Led by the admin team, our online joiners phonebank is an important member retention initiative and has involved phone calls to over 3000 new online joiners this year alone. It also helps to identify key organising and bargaining issues.
- An analysis of leavers, including the latest pre-ballot data cleansing, indicates a high proportion of members retiring or not returning to health and social care post-lockdown. Job replacement is a major element in our bargaining strategy.
- We support UNISON-wide recruitment initiatives.
- We promote the 'Be on the safe side' health & safety initiative, maximising the information and support provided to members across all sectors.
- As we open up, self-organised group activity in the programme is increasing. They support membership growth and retention through online communications linked to equality campaigns; the organisation of events; and raising UNISON's profile in key bargaining, campaigning and policy areas.
- The UNISON College continues to be a highly effective tool for engaging with members and non-members through online activist training, member learning and other initiatives.

Table 5 - UNISON NI special recruitment initiatives, 1 Jan to 30 Sept 2022

Recruitment initiatives	Recruitment				Full members		No. of employers	
	Jan-Sep 2022	Jan-Sep 2021	Total 2021	Total 2020	To Sept 2022	Total 2021	Total 2022	To Sep 2021
Private homecare	124	136	184	327	1341	1355	44	30
HSC Trust Homecare	148	120	170	127	2071	-	5	5
PNHs & residential care	456	407	479	666	3418	3451	201	188
Student nurses	428	168	190	175	669	597	8	8
Integrated Schools	44	30	44	32	353	-	28	-
Doctors surgeries	31	25	24	67	208	239	109	102
Dentist surgeries	5	3	14	38	54	73	31	31
Day-care settings	44	14	25	61	179	172	90	81

Building branch and workplace organisation

This section outlines progress on building branch and workplace organisation during 2022 in four key areas:



The most important indicators of branch health will continue to include levels of member participation; a growing steward base; the filling of branch committee posts; the full application of proportionality and fair representation; and robust branch finances.

The majority of branches function effectively, with the significant increase in recruitment

during 2022 reflecting a return to more normal union building activities. In addition to the reopening of Galway House in June 2022, the period has been marked by:

- a gradual loosening of restrictions on movement across and between workplaces;
- the resumption of members' meetings and traditional core direct recruitment and organising activities;
- a return to more face-to-face delivery within the UNISON College NI, whilst continuing to offer innovative online solutions (see the UNISON College NI section of the Annual Report).

This activity has led to an increase in direct member engagement. However, it is clear that major challenges remain and these are considered in the following sections.

■ Branch development

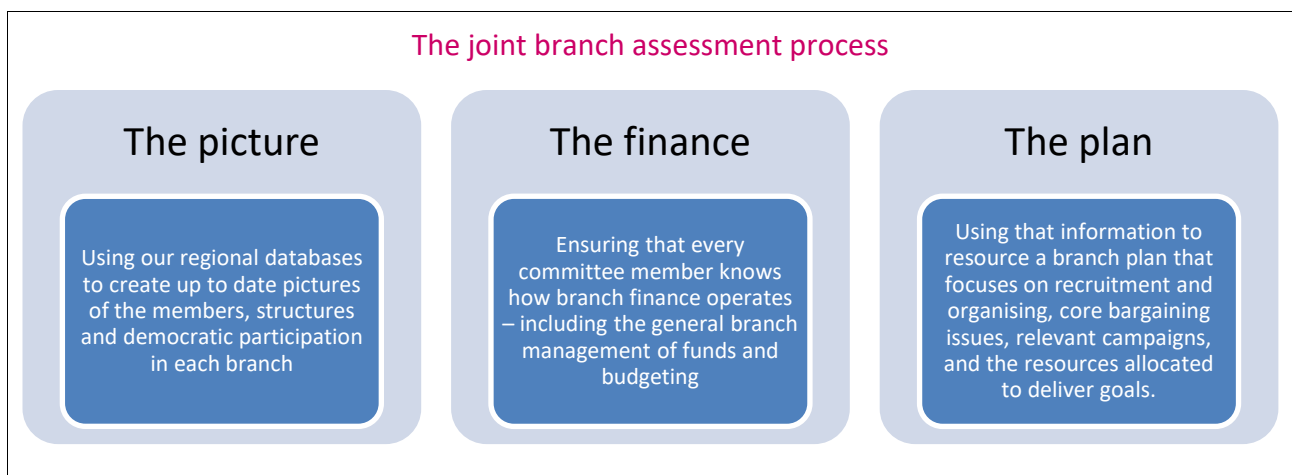
Review of the democratic participation of our members: With opening up, we have been able to move forward on the 11 Review projects. These focus on:

- our members' attitudes to the support and services they receive;
- the overall state of branch development & organisation;
- member participation and the democratic structure and function of our 28 branches;
- our stewards base;
- member representation and branch bargaining;
- the UNISON College NI;

- branch governance, admin and finance;
- our regional democratic structures and internal systems.

Joint branch assessments, activity-based budgets and their implementation: The RMS and organising teams continue to work in partnership with branches to ensure that the joint branch assessment process (supported by the online Organising Framework) is an effective decision-making forum for building branch and workplace organisation. The Review is assessing the extent to which this work is being translated into branch plans and reorganised branch committee agendas.

The joint branch assessment process



Campaign Fund: Following Council, Regional Committee will prepare a bid to support our programme of political campaigning. Branches and groups wishing to make applications to the Campaign fund are advised to contact the regional office for assistance. Regional Committee also supports bids to the Campaign Fund from our allies such as the Equality Coalition, CAJ and PPR.



■ **Branch development – Measuring organising success**

Recruitment & organising	Branch and workplace organisation	Member participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting targets? • Growth in full membership? • A detailed plan with a budget? • The democratic involvement of members? • Recruitment teams in place and active? • Led by elected reps? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with the UNISON rule book and codes? • Financial compliance? • Good governance? • A network of elected, trained and active stewards and H&S reps • An active, trained and effective branch committee with all core posts filled? • Compliance with proportionality and fair representation rules? 	<p>Members facilitated,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to fully take part in workplace and branch meetings? • to fully access UNISON College NI and all member services? • to participate in the democratic life of the union including speaking, voting and accessing information? • to participate in events, rallies, demonstrations and similar activity?

Branch development indicators: Stage 2 of the review of democratic participation is taking an in-depth look at a series of key indicators to assess the democratic health of our branches across all areas of their activity. See the above chart for some examples.

Table 6 highlights some of the most useful branch development indicators that are used by Regional Committee to measure the democratic health of branches and the key areas of support that may be needed.

The table shows that:

- The vast majority of branches have *paid release* resources available;
- all branches completed their yearly *joint branch assessment* with varying degrees of success and submitted the associated online organising framework prior to the April deadline;

- all were *mapped online* to facilitate informed decision-making;
- branch participation in *online communications activity* remains high;
- 19 branches are either in *membership growth in the year to date* or in limited retraction with the potential to move into growth by year end;
- the number of *new stewards*, elected and trained, remains below target. The difficulty in encouraging new reps during the pandemic is a recognised challenge across the union and is core issue for both our own Democratic Review and the HQ led review of recruitment and organising;
- some core posts, in particular on equality, environment, and solidarity require special action from most branches;
- all branches should have their branch committee *minutes* on file as a legal and financial record. This is essential to ensure that decisions are democratically taken by

quorate committees and recorded, including decisions relating to budgets, income and expenditure;

- compliance with UNISON financial rules is indicated only by *financial returns*. However, further compliance measures include the tabling of OLBA reports at monthly meetings, monitoring of budgets, auditing, AGM reporting, and regional support on compliance;
- on *expenses*, Regional Council operates on the principle that volunteers should not be

out of pocket for union activity, but nor is profit to be made from union funds.



Table 6 - Branch development indicators, 2021/22

Branch	Paid release	JBA	Active online	Mapped	Total of new joiners minus leavers	New stewards elected from 1 Oct 2021		Stewards ERA trained Oct 2021 to present		Branch minutes on File?	Submit Finance return on time
						F	M	F	M		
Belfast City Hospital	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↓16	0	0	1	0	Yes	Yes
Belfast Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↑27	6	1	3	1	Yes	Yes
Causeway	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↑12	1	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Community & Vol	A&W	Yes	Yes	Online	↑30	2	0	3	2	Yes	Yes
Craigavon Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↑1	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Derry Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↑83	10	1	5	0	Yes	Yes
Down Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↑88	3	2	1	1	Yes	Yes
Down & Lisburn	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↓52	10	5	5	2	Yes	Yes
Foyle Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↓105	4	1	4	1	Yes	Yes
Greenpark Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↑5	2	2	0	0	Yes	Yes
Health Agencies	A&W	Yes	Yes	Online	↑13	1	0	2	0	Yes	Yes
Mater Hospital	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↑17	1	0	1	1	Yes	Yes
N & W Belfast	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↑47	3	1	2	0	No	Yes
NE Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↓2	1	0	2	0	Yes	Yes
Newry & Mourne	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↑7	2	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
NI Ambulance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↓56	0	0	0	1	Yes	Yes
NI Blood Transfusion	A&W	Yes	Yes	Online	↑9	0	0	0	0	No	Yes
Northern Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↑21	3	2	0	0	Yes	Yes
Omagh & Fermanagh	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↓60	1	1	2	1	Yes	Yes
Orchard H&SC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↑36	0	0	1	0	Yes	Yes
Rathgael	A&W	Yes	Yes	Online	↓2	0	0	0	0	No	Yes
RVH & Muckamore	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↑16	4	3	2	1	Yes	Yes
S & E Belfast	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↑4	3	1	5	1	Yes	Yes
Southern Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↑59	1	1	1	0	Yes	Yes
Sperrin & Devenish	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↑40	1	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
UCHT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online	↓30	2	2	3	4	Yes	Yes
UU Coleraine	A&W	Yes	No	Online	↑4	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
UU Jordanstown	A&W	Yes	No	Online	↓20	1	0	0	0	No	Yes

Measuring branch participation: Table 7 shows that branch participation in those areas required by Rule remains high.

Despite difficulties, online activities organised by all sections of the union, and with partner organisations, significantly increased participation this year. As we open up, we have successfully got back into the workplace and back onto the streets. We have had very significant member participation and engagement in pay demonstrations, cost of living and environment demos at Stormont and in workplaces. We have had similar

participation at marches and rallies on International Women's Day; May Day; the Durham Miners' Gala; solidarity rallies and events; and continuing activity on our school meals and other campaigns.



Table 7- Branch participation, 2021/22

Branch	Attend NDC to rule	Attend Service Group Conf	Attend Regional Council	Attend Service Group	Accessed Equality Training	Took part in online or physical UNISON/UNISON supported events	Attended May Day / ICTU events
Belfast City Hospital	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Belfast Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Causeway	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Community & Vol	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Craigavon Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Derry Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Down & Lisburn	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Down Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Foyle Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Greenpark Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Health Agencies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mater Hospital	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N & W Belfast	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NE Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Newry & Mourne	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
NI Ambulance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NIBTS	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Northern Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Omagh & Fermanagh	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Orchard H&SC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rathgael	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
RVH & Muckamore	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
S & E Belfast	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Southern Ed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sperrin Devenish	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UCHT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UU Coleraine	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
UU Jordanstown	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

■ Membership participation and building the stewards base

Annual General Meetings: Branch AGMs proceeded as normal during 2022 with a mix of physical and virtual online meetings. To maximise participation and member engagement, Regional Committee provided a programme of staff support to branches including support and training from the UNISON College NI; and support from staff on all aspects of the AGM process including social media outreach and publicity prior to the AGM.

However, despite extraordinary effort from our activists many branches were unable to meet their quorums due to the pandemic. In recognition of these efforts Regional Committee ruled that all branches had met the core democratic requirements placed on them by the NEC.

For forthcoming AGMs, Regional Committee has identified a further support programme for branches to face the challenge on workplace stewards elections, filling vacant core posts, and maximising proportionality and fair representation.



Direct member engagement: Throughout 2022, branches and the regional centre have continued to engage extensively with members to ensure their democratic participation in the union.

Branches also continue to take advantage of the bulk emailing system and the text messaging services available from the Regional Centre.

Examples of direct member engagement activities during 2021/22

Thousands of phone calls with new joiners and UNISON members in specific sectors

Hundreds of member representations and workplace meetings - physical and online

Distribution of tens of thousands of newsletters and surveys on health & safety and other key workplace issues

More than half of the members base were contacted by email and post to participate in pay ballot and other consultations

Hundreds of meetings with branch committees, JNFs, employers, lay negotiating teams and self-organised groups, involving nearly 1000 activists

Thousands of 'one to one' staff conversations with individual activists

13,060 followers on our Facebook site

51,967 visitors on the UNISON NI website

3,448 student places accessed in the UNISON College NI

3,740 followers on twitter, with 23,142 viewing our twitter feeds

Thousands of people accessing UNISON NI webinars, video content & films on health & safety & other campaigns

Steward base: Covid, retirement, and changes in work have taken a toll on the main steward base and key branch activist posts. It has also had a negative impact on proportionality and fair representation at branch committee level.



Tackling this challenge will be a priority in the run-up to 2023 AGMs and is central within our wider organising strategies. These include our participation in the UNISON-wide Organising, Recruitment and Strategic Development project, as well as the operationalisation of the Branch Support Organising Fund project. It also remains core work for existing branch officials and the staff organising team.

Table 8 shows that the combined figure of stewards and contacts is 926, a significant drop on the 990 identified in 2021. The main impact is on workplace representation by stewards and in unfilled core posts. The implication of this is increased workload for existing branch officials (who have already borne the brunt of much of the Covid negotiations and pay campaigns) and for the organising team on representation.

The branch development group continues to emphasise the need:

- to prioritise programmes of workplace meetings and stewards elections;
- to encourage members to stand for election as local shop stewards,
- to build leadership, encourage activism and maintain and increase cover across all areas and workplaces;
- to ensure proportionality and fair representation and, in particular, to deal with the challenge of having too few women, black and minority ethnic stewards across branches.

Through the UNISON College NI, and local organising initiatives, work is underway to support the existing activist base following the unprecedented pressure during the pandemic. New approaches and projects will be put in place to support new stewards and mitigate the work-life balance challenges and childcare barriers faced by many of our women members.

The UNISON-wide Organising and Recruitment Strategic Development project will run in tandem with our own Democratic Review to address these issues.



Table 8: Proportionality by activist post- 2021

Activist Position	Total 2022	Women 2022	Men 2022	Total 2021	Women 2021	Men 2021	Total 2020	Women 2020	Men 2020
Branch Secretaries	45	64%	36%	46	61%	39%	44	64%	36%
Branch Chairs	45	67%	33%	39	72%	28%	41	63%	37%
Branch Treasurers	52	71%	29%	51	67%	33%	54	72%	28%
Other Branch Posts	147	63%	37%	143	52%	48%	134	54%	46%
Workplace	454	63%	37%	517	62%	38%	467	64%	36%
Contacts	183	87%	13%	194	87%	13%	194	88%	12%
Total	926	69%	31%	990	66%	34%	934	68%	32%

■ Branch funding

Branch Support & Organising Fund: The UNISON NI Branch Support and Organising Fund (BSOF) Committee have met to consider the operation of the new Branch Support and Organising Fund, agreed at 2021 NDC.



The Committee consists of the Regional Convenors, NI NEC members and Chairs of service groups and SOGs and is responsible for the lay management of the BSOF process, including consideration of project bids from branches and regional structures. The Regional Secretary is responsible for the management, training, and deployment of any BSOF staffing resources.

Set at 2% of subscription income, the NI BSOF allocation for 2022 is £193,412. However, to this the region has added our current Regional Pool surplus of around £100,000 as well as any additional funds that might be raised through branch contributions to form a new, distinct 'Activity Fund'.

This has, in effect, created 2 funding streams to meet the demands of different branch and regional organising project bids.

BSOF Fund - The Committee has agreed that the annual BSOF funding should be ring-fenced to support the recruitment of 3 new permanent NEC employed Local Organisers.

Following discussion with lay structures, the initial projects will centre on social care and non EA membership in education. Success

in the projects will be dependent on them being taken forward by respective branch teams and the organising team. The projects will be time limited and replaced by a further round of projects identified by branches and lay structures.

Activity Fund – An extensive conversation with branch committees indicates willingness by a number of branches to bid for organising resources from the time-limited Activity Fund. The BSOF Committee hopes that branch contributions may be ongoing but, in any event, has spread the spending from the fund over a 2 year period.



Branches can bid for additional organiser support in much the same way as they did with the Fighting Fund but, given the financial limitations of the Activity Fund, the number of potential organisers will be smaller.

Income: Total income returned to Head Office increased to £5,147,265.11 This represents a 4.6% increase on the previous year (£4,919,812.72). Total income returned to branches for 2021 was £1,216,089.56.





Participation and structures

Proportionality and fair representation and operation of UNISON NI structures

The number of our women members has reached 36,828 - 83% of our total membership. The Constitution of **Regional Council** provides for proportionality. Branches and other lay structures fully co-operate to ensure that delegates are proportional on the basis of gender. It is the Regional Council / Regional Committee role to ensure that branches and all structures, including conference delegations, comply with both proportionality and fair representation rules. Branch attendance at the 2021 Council was 96%. The proportion of women delegates rose to 77%.

Lay structures are also designed to ensure positive action in the sectors covered by our self-organised groups. Fair representation is also based on the profile of the membership and includes occupation, sector, geography and community background.

The **Regional Committee** has met 5 times (2 online and 3 physical meetings) since last

Regional Council. The Committee currently has 37 members and its composition stands at 75% women. The NI NEC members are ex-officio. All meetings were quorate. The agenda was dominated by progress on union building, our response to the Covid-19 pandemic, EU exit, and our delivery of UNISON's core objectives and priorities in all four main areas of work.



Regional Committee members also devote additional time to organising priorities through our subgroups as set out in Table 9 below.

Table 9 – Regional Committee sub-structures

Branch development group	Education group	Branch Support & Organising Fund Group	Regional implementation group (& Campaign Fund)
Noreen Robinson James Large Alastair Long Margaret McKee Catherine McKenna Aine Brennan Stephanie Greenwood Clair Hardy	Noreen Robinson James Large Alastair Long Margaret McKee Catherine McKenna Conor McCarthy Anne Taggart Deborah Yapicioz Representatives from Branch Education Officers, ULRs, lay tutors	Noreen Robinson James Large Alastair Long Margaret McKee Catherine McKenna Joint Chairs of service groups and SOGs	Noreen Robinson James Large Alastair Long Margaret McKee Catherine McKenna

Our joint **Regional Convenors**, James Large and Noreen Robinson preside over all formal meetings of our regional lay structures; with UNISON-wide and NEC engagements; and in ICTU delegations to BDC and the forthcoming Northern Conference.

They also play a key role in a wide range of ICTU structures and participate in events, roundtables and discussions with our partners on equality and human rights. Throughout the year they have led all UNISON delegations with political parties.

In June 2021, Margaret McKee, Alastair Long and Catherine McKenna were elected as the **NEC members for NI**. They make reports to Regional Committee and reflect the views of Regional Committee / Regional Council back to the NEC. Each also has a lead role in a range of our campaigns including equality and human rights, organising and global solidarity.

The **Regional Implementation Group** comprises the Joint Convenors and three NEC members for NI, working in partnership with

the Regional Secretary and others. The Group oversees implementation of Regional Committee and NEC policy between meetings of the Regional Council.

The Group also has responsibility for decisions on local applications to the Campaign Fund and carries out a Standing Orders function for Regional Council.

Team UNISON is an amalgamation of all branches and lay structures and had its first post-pandemic meeting in early 2022 to discuss, in-person, key issues including the Branch Support and Organising Fund, the UNISON College NI and our strategy for the NI Assembly elections in May.



Self-organised and special issue groups

Giving voice to tackling disadvantage and combating discrimination

On equality and human rights, we are now 27 years awaiting promised improvements to legislation.

Equality laws which were 10 years ahead of others in 1998 are now 17 years behind. Exit from the EU also 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 53 members representing 25 branches. In 2021/2022, Committee members participated extensively in a wide range of organising and campaigning activity. The Committee has held 4 meetings this year to date. Deborah Yapicioz and Anne McVicker are Joint Chairs.

Participation: In May 2022, the Anna McGonigle Women's Committee was launched in the Western Area and includes reps from the Omagh & Fermanagh, Foyle, Sperrin & Devenish, Derry Education and C&V branches. The Regional Secretary spoke at the launch event in Omagh along with the Joint Committee Chairs and Anna herself.



The local committees in the Northern, Belfast and Southern areas have progressed a number of campaigns. For example:

- the Belfast Inez McCormack Women's Committee developed a petition for the **Free School Meals Campaign** and set up stalls in shopping centres throughout NI to promote this;
- on 15 March 2022, the Belfast Committee also attended a demonstration in support of saving the Regina Coeli Hostel at Parliament Buildings;
- on World Menopause Day (18 October 2022) the Southern Area Women's Committee, along with Southern Education Branch and Catherine McKenna (NEC member) held an awareness raising stall in Craigavon Hospital.

All NI branches participated in regional Women's Committee events this year and members continue to organise local events and ongoing campaigns within their own branches.

Work programme: The Committee's 2022 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;
- ongoing 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;
- supporting the campaign for Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy;
- campaigning for misogyny as a hate crime;
- campaigning for relationships, sexuality education (RSE) in schools.

The UNISON Women's Committee have established working groups on the Free School Meals and Violence against women and girls (VAWG) campaigns.

16 Days of Action working group	VAWG working group
Catherine McKenna Anne Taggart Deborah Yapicioz Anne McVicker Margaret McKee Kirstein Arbuckle Noreen Robinson	Anne McVicker Deborah Yapicioz Rachel Killen Kirstein Arbuckle Anne Taggart Noreen Robinson



The Committee participated in a number of activities as part of **16 Days of Action to end violence against women** (25 Nov – 9 December 2021).

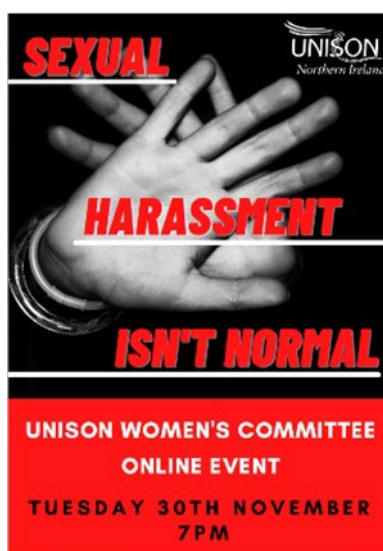
The Education Authority launched their Domestic and Sexual Violence Abuse Workplace Policy. This was co-produced with UNISON and NEC member Catherine McKenna provided a short video welcoming the policy. This was shared on social media. The Committee have led the campaign to raise awareness of domestic and sexual violence abuse as a workplace issue and UNISON will monitor the effective implementation of this progressive policy supporting staff and members employed by the EA.

Committee members attended the Reclaim the Night static rally that took place on Saturday 27 November 2021 and also held an online event - 'Sexual Harassment isn't normal' - on Tuesday 30 November.

Presentations were made on:

- consent (Deborah Yapicioz);
- the importance of Relationship Sexual Education (Catherine McKenna/Irene Graham); and
- 'What can we do, Raise your voice, the 5Ds' (Helen Crickard).

Anne McVicker, Joint Chair, also led a short discussion on the Raise your Voice video "Walking Home" and "victim blaming". Comedian and musician Emer Maguire ended the event with a performance.



On 30 June the Women's Policy Group held a special event launching their new research on **Violence against women and girls (VAWG)**. This was based on results from a survey that received more than 1,000 responses. UNISON Women's Committee members attended. The event highlighted the key findings from VAWG research, insights from members, and included panel discussions and anonymous testimonies from survivors.

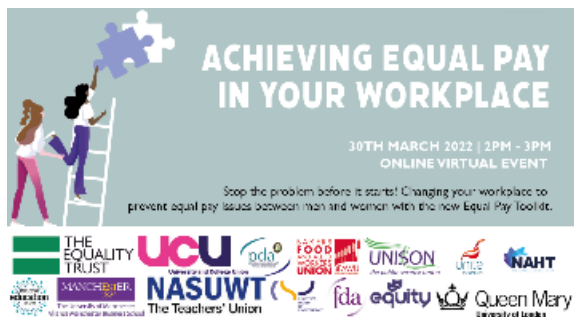


The theme of this year's **International Women's Day** was 'World Changing Women'. Committee members participated in the following events.

- UNISON had the largest turnout at a static rally on 5 March - the first physical get together of the year.
- Deborah Yapicioz represented UNISON at the first ever Women's Parliament on 4 March and spoke on women's employment and low paid precarious work.
- On 7 March a film night and panel was organised in the QFT in conjunction with UNISON College. Following the film 'Made in Dagenham', Patricia McKeown spoke about the Equal Pay Case in the Royal Hospital and Joint Chairs (Anne McVicker and Deborah Yapicioz) spoke about their UNISON journey.
- On Tuesday 8 March, an online event "Inez McCormack - A Challenging Woman" was hosted by STUC. This explored the life and legacy of NI's leading human rights activist and former UNISON NI Regional Secretary, Inez McCormack. Danielle McCusker attended this event on behalf of UNISON.

In March 2022, UNISON welcomed the news from the Assembly that the **Period Products** (Free Provision) Bill; Safe Leave (Paid Leave for Victims of Domestic Abuse) Bill; and Safe Access Zones Bill all passed in the Assembly.

Regional Committee paid tribute to the NI Women's Committee and staff who have campaigned on these issues for many years.



In response to the **Cost of Living crisis**, the Committee organised an online event on 8 April with Lighthouse Financial Services to deliver a webinar specifically designed to help UNISON members with money management.

We also continue to promote the work of Agnes Fraser who has assisted several thousand UNISON members and women to access the benefits system. The Committee will now play a vital role in both the UNISON and ICTU Cost of Living Campaigns given the disproportionate impact on our women members.

Our **Pathways programme** has resumed with 22 new women activists completing the training in May and September.

In December 2021, UNISON sponsored the launch by **Reclaim the Agenda** of a book, 'Phenomenal Women', charting 10 years of women's activism.

In March 2022, Committee members attended the launch of the **Equal Pay Toolkit** – the new practical guide to bargaining for equal pay.

Conferences, committees and events: This year's online national Women's Conference was Chaired by Deborah Yapicioz in February. The theme was 'Empowering Women in UNISON' and Irene Graham moved the UNISON NI motion 'Relaunch of the Feminist Recovery Programme'. Our delegation spoke on child care; an end to violence against women and girls; and sexual harassment.

UNISON women members are represented on the *ICTU Women's Committee* by Deborah Yapicioz and Danielle McCusker, Vice Chair.

This year's *ICTU Women's Conference* was held in the Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle in September. The theme was 'Women in trade unions – shaping the future of work' and our motion on the cost-of-living crisis and its impact on women & families was passed unanimously. Many of our delegates were first time speakers and the whole delegation participated in debates.



At the time of writing, the Trade Union Women's Council of the Isles, covering all 4 Congresses, is scheduled for October in Glasgow hosted by the STUC. Our UNISON delegation is Deborah Yapicioz, representing the ICTU Women's Committee, and Patricia McKeown and Anne Speed representing the ICTU Executive Council.

Two Committee members, Caroline Cassidy and Kate Farrell recently attended the *ICTU Women in Leadership* Course in Dublin and NEC member Catherine McKenna has been invited to make a presentation to the SIPTU Women's Leadership course scheduled for November.

The work of the Women's Committee is supported by Danielle McCusker, Area Organiser.



■ LGBT+ Group

The LGBT+ Group has met 6 times since the last Regional Council. It has 130 registered members representing 27 branches across NI. Our Group is regarded as a trade union leader on LGBT+ campaigns.



Increasing participation: The number of registered group members, while growing, is not yet reflective of our LGBT+ membership. Consequently, encouraging participation is a constant priority. During 2022, the group has increased participation at meetings and got new members more involved by:

- developing and participating in social media campaigns;
- continuing its engagement with UNISON branches, including the return of workplace stalls and publicity;
- developing a WhatsApp group to co-ordinate activity.

Workplan: A number of our members also work for LGBT+ campaigning organisations and are consequently members of the Equality Coalition, co-convened by UNISON and CAJ. These partner organisations and UNISON have fed into the recommendations of the LGBTQI+ Strategy Expert Advisory Panel. Our workplan includes:

- pressing for the Strategy;
- making input where we can on the key Strategy issues around health services, education, safety and security, legal rights, and proper data and monitoring;
- continued input into other relevant policy consultations;
- promotion of UNISON-wide LGBT+ campaigns;
- continued work with UNISON branch committees and members;
- representation and attendance in UNISON lay structures – local, regional and national;

- encouraging active participation in Pride and other LGBTQ+ events and activities.

UNISON were delighted to be able to support **Belfast Pride, Foyle Pride and Omagh Pride** and had a great turn out at each event. For Foyle Pride, we collaborated with Rainbow to organise a successful LGBTQIA well-being day.

Our joint chair, Martin McConnellogue was awarded the **Mark Ashton award for outstanding contribution to the LGBT+ community**. The award is a reflection of his commitment to the cause.



In July, UNISON launched its **Trans equality campaign**, which features updated guidance on trans workers' rights. The campaign's objectives are:

- to roll out trans ally training across all UNISON regions;
- to build trans and non-binary member activism to organise and campaign on workplace issues;
- to ensure workplaces are safe by adopting UNISON's model trans policy; and
- to fight to make sure UNISON's activism is heard by politicians.

In February, as part of **LGBT+ history month**, the Group hosted an online showing of 'Different Journeys', a documentary on the journeys travelled within the LGBT+ community in Foyle. The event was organised through our UNISON College NI, and included input from the Regional Secretary on the union's journey as a champion of LGBT+ rights.

The 2022 **UNISON LGBT+ conference** will be held in November in Edinburgh.

The work of the Group is supported by Louise O'Hara, Regional Organiser.

■ Disability Group

The Disability Committee has met 3 times since last Regional Council. Branch nominations to the Group have increased and we continue to encourage branches to take up their entitlement to 2 places.

Workplan: The key elements of our workplan for 2021/22 include the following key activities.

Negotiations have taken place with the Belfast Health Trust and the South Eastern Health Trust on the design and implementation of **Disability Passports**. This is a document between a disabled worker and their employer which lists reasonable adjustments and the support the worker requires throughout their employment. Belfast Health Trust will be introducing Disability Passports in the coming weeks and Group members continue to pursue Disability Passports within their own respective Trusts.

The NI Education Authority has implemented Disability Passports and Group members report that they are working well.

The Group also continues:

- to assess the **Disability Action Plans** of employers across the public sector in the key areas of selection, recruitment and training;
- to work with the wider UNISON team to ensure that disabled people are central to the **rebuild and redesign of our health service**;
- to campaign on **mental health issues in the workplace**. This necessitates raising the profile of the impact of mental health on workers, and the need for employers to have 'Mental Health in the Workplace' policies to provide support to their staff;
- to raise awareness of **Access to Work (NI)**. This is a scheme administered by the Department for Communities that provides advice, support and financial assistance to people with disabilities to take up employment or who are in work and experience difficulties related to their disability. Support can include help with additional costs that arise such as special aids and equipment, adaptations to the

workplace, and costs in travelling to and from work. Employers can also avail of the scheme to help with any additional costs.



The disadvantage that disabled people encounter in the labour market is demonstrated by a large and enduring disability employment gap, and disability gaps in pay, job satisfaction and work-related well-being. UNISON's new **UNISON Disability Employment Charter** outlines the action Government needs to take to address the disadvantage disabled people encounter in their working lives. Action is also required by UNISON branches and activists to promote the Charter with employers. This will form the work of the Committee in 2023.

Committees, conferences and events:

UNISON is represented on the ICTU Disability Committee by Marjorie Trimble and Amanda Sweetlove; on the UNISON National Disability Committee by Amanda Sweetlove and Amanda Rutherford; and on Regional Committee by Marjorie Trimble. National Disabled Members Conference will be held physically this year in Brighton from 29 to 31 October.

UNISON, on behalf on NIC-ICTU, participated in the Department of Economy's workshops on a Disability Employment Strategy for NI and the Departmental review of Workable NI and the Access to Work Scheme. Progress has been slow on the Disability Employment Strategy and reviews of Workable NI and Access to Work due to the current non-functioning NI Executive and Assembly.

The work of the Group is supported by Joe McCusker, Regional Organiser.

■ Black and Migrant Workers' Group

The black and migrant workers group met 10 times this year. There are 14 members in the Group (64% women). The Group was very sad to hear of the passing of Ronald Vellem to Covid, in February. Ronald had been an active member of the group for several years and leaves a big gap in the human rights and migrant sector.

Workplan: The following key areas of our workplan include:

- increasing membership and participation in the union at all levels;
- increasing the representation of black and migrant workers, stewards and office holders;
- analysing membership trends and their impact on our wider organising, bargaining and policy agendas;
- developing and participating in key campaigns to secure rights for our black and migrant workers;
- including refugees and asylum seekers in our programmes, and campaigning for their rights.

Participation and membership trends:

Participation on the B&MW Group continues to grow, reflecting the increasing number of black and migrant worker members recruited over the past number of years. This growth is a direct result of the continual recruitment of migrant workers in the Health Trusts and the private care sector. We currently have over

2500 black and migrant worker members listed on our system, but this figure is very likely to be a significant underestimate.



Fig. 7 shows that:

- 39% of our black and migrant worker members state that they are Asian;
- 25% state that they are Indian;
- 21% state that they are white/other; and
- 13% state that they are black.

Fig. 8 shows that:

- 91% of our black and migrant worker members state that they work in the health sector. This includes 55% who work for HSC Trusts, 29% who work for private nursing homes, and 7% who work for employment agencies;
- 5% work for the Education Authority or in schools, and
- 2% work in housing associations or for the community & voluntary sector.

Over 50% of our B&MW members are nurses and 70% are women.

Fig. 7 – UNISON NI black and migrant worker membership by self-reported ethnic group

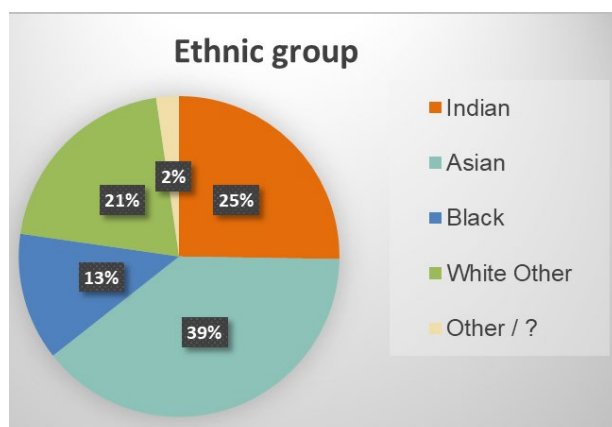
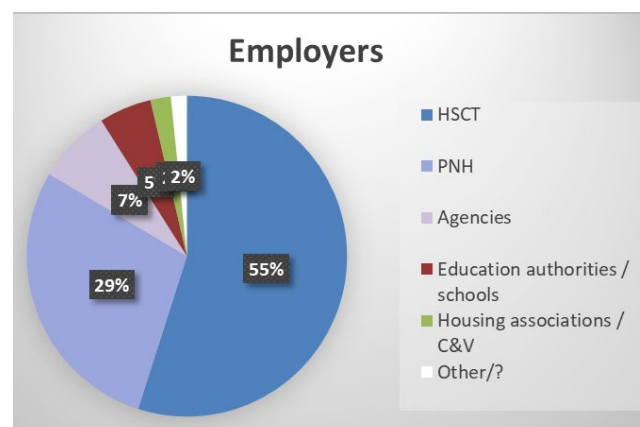


Fig. 8 – UNISON NI black and migrant worker membership by employer



A high proportion of our B&MW membership are currently on work permits, leaving them extremely vulnerable to exploitation as they are tied to their employers both legally and financially. The consequences of this are particularly acute in the private care sector, with many choosing to leave their jobs, despite the legal complications and huge financial burden this entails.

Two of our activists from Foyle ran a survey of black and migrant workers in the branch to try and gauge the issues members struggle with. This will hopefully identify more activists and recruit new members. In Autumn 2021, the Group was invited to give evidence to the **NI Affairs Committee** on the experiences and challenges of minority ethnic and migrant people living here.

Group members participated in a number of events in March 2022 to mark **International Day Against Racism**. This included Beverly Simpson speaking at the Women's Parliament in Stormont, and members attending a workshop organised with City of Sanctuary and ICTU on rights at work for migrant Workers.



UNISON has endorsed the **Common Travel Area campaign**, alongside the NW Migrant Forum.

The Group participated in a project with the Law Centre NI and Belfast Trust, looking at **Pathways to employment for refugees and asylum seekers with a healthcare background**. This is a long-standing issue affecting some of our English Class students.

Group member Dean Lee organised a sharing session for the Group to mark **Black History Month** in October 2021. This has

subsequently led to an organising peer support group drop in (see below).

In May, Flora Alfante and the Craigavon branch organised a zoom information session on **Pathways to citizenship for migrant workers** with a solicitor from the Law Centre NI. This International Nurses Day event attracted over 50 registrations and led to the organisation of further zoom information sessions on housing, rental rights and access to mortgages with MCNI.

The group met with Fidelma Carolan from the Trust Leadership Centre on the issue of **Equality and diversity in the Trusts / Equality in career progression** and identified a number of potential routes for action in 2023.

The issue of **work permit holders and repayment clauses** has been the focus of most of our work during 2022. We are getting regular referrals from branches of people affected by this. Members who have been through that experience have also joined our group.

Typically, some migrant workers on work permits, who have come to work in private nursing homes especially, can find themselves feeling extremely unhappy and unsafe. Some feel that they are treated as the “property of the home” and expected to fill in for whatever (and whenever) the need is. They are constantly reminded of how much money it has cost the employer to bring them over, and of how grateful they should be. Yet if they try to leave before the end of their contract, they face bills of thousands of pounds.

Members who were in touch with us and decided to leave their employer have been charged between £3000 and £10500 to be released from their ‘contract’. One member of our group was interviewed by our communication team in London and was involved in a lobby visit to Westminster with the International Nurses Forum (see *UNISON magazine Feb 22 on this issue – or the Guardian 27/03/22*).

Our group, together with the policy team, have commissioned research from a local barrister to look at potential redress and measures that could allow us to challenge these decisions.

Patrick Yu has also raised the issue with members of the Stormont All Party Group on Ethnic Minorities, and we have been in touch with a Departmental team that deals with the local version of the International Recruitment Code of Practice. The code has just been updated and reissued in England amidst campaigning from UNISON and others and following a parliamentary committee report that recommended putting an end to repayment clauses.



UNISON NI continues to work within the wider union structures to increase **access to immigration advice through our legal services**. Currently, our legal advice services only covers advice to the member through a weekly immigration helpline. This is the subject of a further motion from the Group to Regional Council. In the meantime, our face-to-face immigration clinics are finally up and running again (*see below*).

We have started a regular zoom monthly drop in / support group for members. This takes place every first Monday of the month at 2.30pm. This is a **peer support group online session** where members can meet and discuss issues that are important to them in a safe setting.

Face to face **English classes** (both OET and IELTS) resumed in Galway House in September. These continue to be a great help for people who need to sit these exams. We were able to keep remote one-to-one support throughout the last two years through our very dedicated English tutor Susan Good.

Face-to-face **immigration clinics** are finally up and running again thanks to the Justice Migration Project from the Law Centre. A Law Centre solicitor provides the one to one clinic on a monthly / bi monthly basis, depending on demand. UNISON Direct also continues to provide access to an immigration phone helpline one day a week for members.

Support for refugees and asylum seekers:

Both our English classes and immigration advice clinics are open to refugees and asylum seekers.

In June, UNISON sponsored the Belfast City of Sanctuary Great Refugee picnic. Earlier, the Regional Secretary and Stephanie Thomas, Assistant General Secretary had an introductory meeting with the Belfast City of Sanctuary Committee.

Marches and rallies: Members attended a number of marches and demonstrations throughout the year, including May Day, Pride events, the Stormont day of action on the cost-of-living crisis. At this event our group was particularly well represented with the fantastic Kerala Beats keeping up our spirits on the walk up to Stormont.

Committees and conferences: Black Members Conference was cancelled in January, but replaced by a virtual conference at the end of May. Patrick Yu presented the motion on access to Immigration advice and representation through our legal services on behalf of the National Black Members Committee.

The motion was agreed unanimously and was subsequently submitted by the national committee to National Delegate Conference. Although the motion was not heard, it is the first time this issue has been brought up outside of the Black Members Conference or NI Regional Council.

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

Special issue groups

■ Retired Members' Forum

The Retired Members Forum held 3 meetings during 2022 including a physical meeting in Galway House in June. It has 39 members and its composition currently stands at 75% women.

Recruitment and organising: Whilst the capacity of the Forum to assist branches has been restricted due to the pandemic, individual members have continued to participate in online recruitment and organising campaigns.

Campaigns, lobbying and events: The Forum has continued to campaign and lobby on a series of key UNISON priorities throughout the year. Forum members have participated in all online and physical UNISON rallies and demonstrations including the Stormont Cost of Living event in June. Members have also continued to distribute UNISON information across wider trade union structures and community networks.

Whilst physical meetings continue to be restricted, the following Forum members

continue to represent UNISON NI on union bodies and external campaign initiatives:

- UNISON NI Regional Committee – Olive Barry
- National UNISON Retired Members Committee - Martin Gallagher
- UNISON Retired Members' Standing Orders Committee – Noel Muldoon
- UNISON Retired Members' Conference – Rose Reynolds;
- UNISON NDC – Martin Gallagher
- National Pensioners' Convention - Rosaleen Davidson, Mary Ferris, Victor Murphy
- ICTU Biennial Conference - Angela Boorman & Archie Thomson
- ICTU Retired Members' Committee - Angela Boorman and Archie Thomson.

Archie also represented ICTU retired members on the ICTU Executive Committee for a 2 year term which ended with the ICTU Biennial conference in October 2021.

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

■ Young Members' Forum

The Forum held a number of online briefings during 2022 and includes 6 members from 5 branches.

Increasing participation remains a key issue, with the majority of young members who had attended the Forum in 2021 no longer eligible to attend as they have now reached the age of 27. However, these members have agreed to support the current young members with their campaigns. We thank them for their contribution during their time on the Forum and will continue to support them engaging with their branch.

National young members conference: Forum members attended the first ever young members conference in Cardiff in December 2021. This replaces the young members

weekend. Motions focused on the challenges of delivering underfunded public services during the pandemic, the way Covid-19 has exposed and deepened inequalities, and the impact on people's health and wellbeing.



Work programme: A lot of the work of the Forum this year has focused on activities addressing the issues members faced during Covid.

The forum hosted a series of online meetings and used the social media platform to highlight these issues.

The Young Members Forum launched their 'Snacks and Facts' campaign, aimed at educating young members on the role of trade unions and dealing with workplace issues.



The Forum continues to welcome the support of the branches to advertise these events and encourage young members to get involved.

The work of the Forum is supported by Susan Neill (Area Organiser) and Caitlin Ni Chathail (Regional Education Organiser).

■ Health & Safety Group and other member focused H&S activity

This section provides details on the work of the UNISON NI Health & Safety Group as well as some additional member-focused activity undertaken by UNISON NI during the year.

Health and Safety Group: The Group met twice during 2022 and members also attended a number of events and training sessions. The Group includes all branch health and safety officers but attendance at Group meetings remains low with 7 regular participants, primarily from health branches. Increasing representation and attendance is a priority moving forward.

Work programme: The work programme of the Group includes:

- encouraging stewards in all branches to attend health & safety training;
- expanding the Group by encouraging participation from all branches;
- supporting H&S officers to continue carrying out inspections in the workplace;
- UNISON reps taking the lead within all employers' health and safety committees;
- ensuring the adequate provision of PPE and other H&S equipment and materials for all our members.

International Workers Memorial Day – 28 April:

The NIC/ICTU event scheduled for the Mac in Belfast on 28 April was unfortunately cancelled due to IT issues but our activists commemorated the day at the memorial tree in the grounds of Stormont. Ray Rafferty (RVH & Muckamore branch) assisted with a NIC/ICTU video produced for IWMD.



Committees and seminars: In April, Barry Gorman, (UCHT branch), stepped down as the UNISON NI rep to the National Health and Safety Forum and was replaced by Carmen Biagioni from the RVH & Muckamore branch. Emma-Jane Cullen, (Orchard branch) and Ray Rafferty, continue to represent UNISON NI on the NIC/ICTU health and safety committee. A number of branches sent delegates to the UNISON-wide health & safety seminar in London, on 24 May.

Health & safety recruitment & organising project: UNISON NI continues to maximise the health & safety advice, information and support provided to members and links this in with the union's Be on the safe side campaign to identify, mobilise and maximise the current H&S activist and officer base: As part of our plan we:

- negotiate specific Covid-19, health & safety, return to the workplace and other related policies and guidance across sectors and staff groups in NI;
- ensure that this information is communicated to our members, branches and activists in an effective, accessible and timely way; and
- use this activity to maximise recruitment and retention.

Health & safety education and training: The education strand of the project is focused on ensuring that our health and safety activists are properly trained and confident to undertake their roles, particularly with regard to engaging with their employer; carrying out H&S inspections and risk assessments; and knowing their rights under H&S legislation.

The UNISON College section of this report shows that 135 members (80% women) attended the 6 health & safety courses and 12 sessions on offer this year.

The work of the Group 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.

There are 54 members of the **Health Service Group**. Its current composition is 74% women, the same as last year. The group has met 3 times in formal session during 2022, with a further 5 briefing sessions and other pay campaign meetings throughout the year.

There are 21 members of the **Local Government and Education Service Group**. Its composition currently stands at 81% women, up from 75% last year. The group met 3 times in formal session during 2022 with a further 7 briefing sessions.

National representation

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 10 – UNISON national structures – 2021/22

UNISON national structures	NI Representatives
NEC	Alastair Long; Margaret McKee; Catherine McKenna
Local Govt Service Group Executive	Daphne Hutchinson; Heather McKinstry
Health Service Group Executive	Maura McKenna; Jill Weir; Deborah Yapicioz
Health Sector Committees	Ambulance – Alastair Long Nursing & Midwifery – Briege McLaughlin Operational Services – Kim Hall Science & Technical – Stephen McNeill
Schools Committee	Stephanie Kennedy; Anne Taggart
Higher Education	Vacant as a result of privatisation
Women's Committee	Anne McVicker (Chair); Deborah Yapicioz
Disability Committee	Amanda Rutherford; Amanda Sweetlove
LGBT	Catherine Connell-Tierney; tbc (election in progress)
National Young Members Forum	Vacant
Health and Safety	Carmen Biagioni
National Black Members Committee	Patrick Yu; Stella Sharkey
National Retired Members	Martin Gallagher



Developing membership services

The UNISON College NI

The UNISON College NI has again responded to meet the needs of members and activists in an ever-changing and challenging environment. 2022 saw a successful return to classroom learning, although health & safety requirements meant that classroom numbers were smaller, and, on occasions, we had to revert to virtual learning. For the majority of the face to face learning we had to rely on UNISON tutors only, as many providers have not returned to physical learning.

As part of the UNISON NI review of democratic participation, we are assessing how we can maximise the College as a key organising resource – including increasing participation across branches. We are also reviewing all aspects of regional and branch education, including barriers to participation, delivery, communications and outreach; and identifying education, training and other activities to support our activist base.



The General Secretary, Christina McAnea, formally launched the union-wide UNISON College at NDC in June. It is based on the model developed in NI and aims to bring high quality learning and training opportunities to every UNISON member and activist. The College will offer members a careers information, advice and guidance service. Members will be able to request a consultation with an expert advisor to find out what training and qualifications are needed to reach their personal career goals. See - learning.unison.org.uk/college.

Learning in the virtual world: Much of the virtual learning aids we created in the past few years have become more accessible to our members. Our team have assisted members to access the resources with 1-to-1 assistance over the phone. This, coupled with raised awareness, has led to a significant increase in our e learning offer during 2022.

Over the past year:

- activists have accessed 576 student places (79% women) on 33 separate activists courses
- members have accessed 2872 student places (84% women) across 757 wide-ranging topics on issues related to professional registration, member development and digital skills. These were a combination of classroom-based courses, e learning courses and pre-recorded lectures on a variety of issues.

When we surveyed our members, the additional ask on learning was for more flexibility and, with increased pressures, they wanted access to learning they could do in their own time. We invested in E learning modules not only to meet this need but also to give access to a greater variety of topics.

While we hoped for a full return to physical learning this time last year, we had only 3 courses completed before we had to return to a virtual classroom. During this time we trained new tutors and tried hybrid technologies.

In the past year we have brought the programme to Derry, Belfast, Lisburn and Craigavon and invested in new systems to allow us to bring in learners from anywhere in NI. To date this has been a success on both our member learning and activist programmes.

ICTU have continued to deliver courses from the South Eastern Regional College and this has provided accreditation for our 6 day health & safety course. ICTU also offer a range of excellent follow on accreditation opportunities and short seminars on topics such as redundancy, pensions and disability. These are provided by the LRA and the Equality Commission NI. We promote these to activists to ensure they have the most up to date information on relevant issues.

Looking to the Future: The education team have been building next year's programme with input from the Regional Committee Education Group, our organisers, activists, self-organised groups and members. The 2023 programme will include some new additions and reinvigorate some courses that we haven't been able to run this year. We will offer more opportunities to our members for accredited learning and career development opportunities.

■ Trade union education

The trade union education courses we deliver are designed:

- to support activists in their jobs and personal roles;
- to build on trade union values and the principles of equality and human rights;
- to develop activists with the skills and confidence necessary to effectively organise, negotiate, represent and campaign.

Our Programme this year heavily invested in our activist education. Many new courses were developed with our lay tutors and much of what we had held back for face to face learning was delivered during 2022.

The organising steward: Almost all of the stewards training this year returned to the physical classroom with great success and increased participation. During 2021/22 we trained 113 reps (74% women) on stage 1 and 2 courses – up from the 90 reps (62% women) in 2020/21. Many of these activists have continued with their education, completing a range of other UNISON College NI courses.

Stewards & representation: In total, 34 activists (79% women) attended 3 general stewards and representation courses during 2021/22. 5 sessions were held in total and included *Introduction to Employment Law* (14 reps); *Representing members at grievance & disciplinary hearings* (12 reps); and *Disability discrimination law* (8 reps).

We have also provided our activists with additional materials including virtual sessions from Thompsons Solicitors and our policy team on employment and equality laws, alongside a

range of helpful guides and materials. These are sent out to our activists with each education newsletter.

Negotiating, campaigning, equality and human rights: 33 activists (76% women) participated in 4 courses under the negotiating, campaigning, equality and human rights section of the programme during 2021/22. These included *Terms and conditions for new beginners in education* (7 reps); *Green issues* (6 reps); a screening and discussion of the Foyle pride *Different journeys* film (8 reps); and *Section 75 statutory duty of equality of opportunity* (12 reps). The *Using equality laws to win* course detailed in Table 11 is a hybrid session that was delivered to 106 members as part of all mandatory stewards module 1 and ERA refresher training. It is also available every month to hundreds of activists in the activist newsletter.



Health & safety: Our health and safety courses remained hugely popular during 2021/22 with 135 participants attending the 6 courses and 12 sessions on offer. Historically, health and safety courses disproportionately attracted men. However, 73% of accredited learners in our health & safety courses during 2021/22 were women, continuing the upward trend we have seen in the past two years.

Attendance at our accredited **health & safety reps** courses has increased by 44% - from 52 reps last year to 75 reps this year. 31 reps (61% women) attending the accredited *health & safety module 1* course with a further 44 reps (59% women) returning for *health & safety module 2*.

The proportion of women in attendance increases to 88% across the 4 non-accredited **health, safety & wellbeing** courses on offer. These included *health and safety for school cleaners* (7 members); *Suicide first aid* (9 members); *Managing challenging behaviours in the classroom* (34 members); and *Bullying at work* (10 members). These courses were targeted at the concerns our members are currently facing in the workplace.

Branch officer training: This year we again offered training for most branch officer posts with 45 activists (69% women) attending *branch secretaries, chairs, welfare officers; Treasurers (OLBA); and finance and the organised branch* courses. Total participation and proportionality was up from the 25 officers (60% women) who attended courses last year. Some of this training was carried over from 2020/21 and had to be delivered virtually. However, all training from Spring onwards has resumed physically, coupled with additional training development opportunities for officers on courses such as *communication, effective conversations* and *public speaking*.

Women's development education: Much of our women's development education in the past 2 years had been held back as it was more suited to physical delivery. This year the programme resumed with 76 women attending *Pathways; Public speaking for women*; and a film screening and discussion, held on International Women's Day. This screening event launched a new development programme targeted to women members who have come through our initial activist courses in the past three years.

A further 358 women activists have attended courses under our activist development programme during 2021/22. Five women activists also attended the ICTU Women in leadership course. Women's participation in the member learning programme was 84%.



Building new leaders: Significant outreach resulted in women making up 77% of those who attended building new leaders courses this year. At the start of 2022 we trained 7 new *lay tutors* (71% women). This brought new content and has helped build a programme that can better respond to changing learner needs. Lay tutors visited branch committee meetings and self-organised groups to deliver training. They also offered follow on training for new stewards on topics such as *writing effective motions* and *terms & conditions for beginners*.

40 reps (75% women) attended 4 *ERA refresher sessions*; with additional courses including *coaching and mentoring* (3 reps); *communicating with impact* (20 reps); *public speaking* (7 reps); and *first aid for activists* (12 reps).

Our **planning for retirement** sessions were facilitated by Lighthouse financial and Thompsons solicitors. We held a session for each of the *pension schemes* and they were attended by 44 members (89% women).

Partnering with self-organised groups: The education programme continues to work closely with our self-organised and special issues groups to deliver sections of the programme: This included, working with:

- the Young Members' Forum, offering packages of support for young members during their 'You matter' campaign .
- the Women's Committee, supporting the launch of the women's development programme and the writing effective motions course;
- the Black and migrant workers group, on the OET and IELTS preparation classes;
- the Welfare Group, on welfare refresher training.

Table 11: UNISON College trade union education by course and main topic, 1 Oct 2021 to 30 Sept 2022

Course	No. of courses	No of Student Places			
		Total	F	M	
STEWARDS INDUCTION					
The Organising Steward (Module 1)	5	66	51	15	
The Organising Steward (Module 2)	5	47	33	14	
	2021/22	10	113	84 (74%)	29 (26%)
	2020/21	8	90	56 (62%)	35 (38%)
STEWARDS & REPRESENTATION					
Introduction to Employment Law ¹	2	14	12	2	
Representing members at grievance & disciplinary hearings	2	12	8	4	
Disability discrimination law	1	8	7	1	
	2021/22	5	34	27 (79%)	6 (21%)
	2020/21	4	52	25 (48%)	27 (52%)
NEGOTIATING, CAMPAIGNING, EQUALITY & HUMAN RIGHTS					
Terms and conditions for beginners EA	1	7	4	3	
Green Issues	1	6	6	0	
Different Journeys screening	1	8	6	2	
Using equality laws to win ²	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Section 75 - Statutory duty of equality of opportunity	1	12	9	3	
	2021/22	4	33	25 (76%)	8 (24%)
	2020/21	9	66	43 (65%)	23 (35%)
HEALTH & SAFETY REPS					
Health & Safety Module 1	3	31	19	12	
Health & Safety Module 2	4	44	26	18	
	2021/22	7	75	45 (60%)	30 (40%)
	2020/21	7	52	27 (52%)	25 (48%)
HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING					
Health and Safety for School cleaners	1	7	6	1	
Suicide First Aid	1	9	8	1	
Managing Challenging Behaviours in the classroom	2	34	33	1	
Bullying at work	1	10	6	4	
	2021/22	5	60	53 (88%)	7 (12%)
	2020/21	13	148	112 (76%)	36 (24%)
BRANCH OFFICER TRAINING					
Finance & the organised branch	1	12	9	3	
Branch Secretaries	2	11	10	1	
Branch Welfare Officer	1	4	1	3	
Branch Chairs	1	6	4	2	
Branch Treasurers (OLBA)	1	12	7	5	
	2021/22	6	45	31 (69%)	14 (31%)
	2020/21	4	25	15 (60%)	10 (40%)

¹ These were 2 physical courses run by Thompsons. The session is also available on our stewards padlet.

² This hybrid session was delivered to 106 members as part of all mandatory stewards module 1 and ERA refresher training. It is also available every month to hundreds of activists in the Activist Newsletter.

Table 11 - UNISON College trade union education by course and main topic, 1 Oct 2021 to 30 Sept 2022

Course	No. of courses	No of Student Places		
		Total	F	M
WOMEN’S DEVELOPMENT TRAINING				
Pathways	2	20	20	0
Women’s cinema event and discussion	1	48	48	0
Public speaking women’s	1	8	8	0
2021/22	4	76	76	0
BUILDING NEW LEADERS & UPDATING EXISTING LEADERS				
Lay tutor training	1	7	5	2
Coaching and mentoring	1	3	2	1
Communicating with impact	1	20	15	5
ERA Refresher	4	40	30	10
Public speaking	1	7	6	1
First Aid for activists	1	12	11	1
Writing effective motions	1	7	5	2
2021/22	10	96	74 (77%)	22 (23%)
2020/21	3	25	16 (64%)	9 (36%)
PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT				
Planning for retirement – NILGOSC		34	30	4
Planning for retirement- HSCNI	1	10	9	1
2021/22	2	44	39	5
2020/21	2	50	30 (60%)	20 (40%)
Total 2021/22	53	576	454 (79%)	122 (21%)
Total 2020/21	51	508	316 (62%)	192 (38%)

■ Member learning programme

This part of the programme offered 723 wide-ranging topics across 757 different sessions. 2872 student places were accessed (84% women) and covered areas such as professional registration, Clinical CPD Modules, training in specialist areas and career development opportunities.

Across our classroom-based and online courses 688 student places were accessed (85% women). 1,988 courses were accessed with our learning licences and a further 196 pre-recorded lectures were accessed. We also gave our members access to over 600 clinical journal articles.

Feedback from organisers and workplace reps on the programme as a recruitment tool is consistently positive.

Managed and administered by ICTU, the **Union Learning Fund (ULF)** was established in 2002 by Government to promote trade union learning activity. The Fund recognises the role that unions play in engaging adults who have been disadvantaged or excluded from education in the past, and supports projects that seek to develop skills, achieve qualifications and promote lifelong learning opportunities within the workplace.



During the year UNISON continued to deliver successfully on the ULF learning outcomes, primarily through:

- IELTS English language and OET language test for healthcare professionals sessions;
- Essential skills and interview skills courses;
- CPD for members;
- Open University modules, including K102 Introduction to health and social care.

For the second year in a row, we were able to offer K102 twice in the academic year. For the first time we offered places to our members in all branches and arranged learning agreements with new employers. This year we again secured student finance or additional money from employers to cover places on the course. In Feb 2023, we will offer another intake. This will be open to all members .

Open University: Through our partnership with the Open University we offer K102 module to our members. This is the single biggest area of member engagement in the programme. Hundreds of queries about the course come in throughout the year. During application we then offer application support sessions and intensive student finance application support. As K102 is now also a route to social work, we will run outreach in the coming year to promote this aspect and take the course to new workplaces and employers.

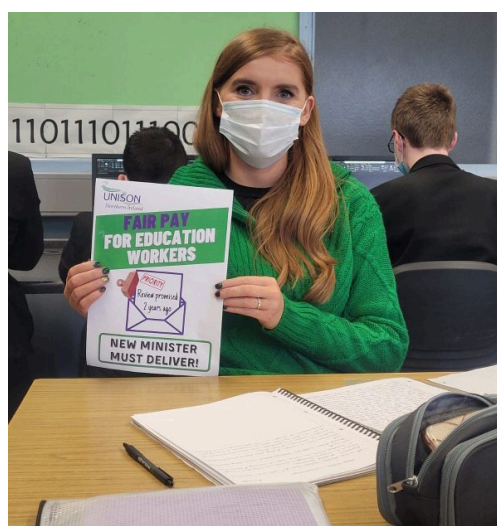
Essential skills: Regional Colleges require minimum numbers in order to accredit essential skills courses. We have been able to continue to offer places on courses as part of Union Learn Partnerships with 17 members gaining places this year in English, Maths and ICT. Due to issues with Colleges not offering the course early in the pandemic, these numbers

only cover the 6 months from October to March.

Grants: UNISON continues to actively promote a range of grants for study towards trade union studies, women's studies, GCSEs, vocational courses and the Open University. 10 members were awarded a grant during 2022.

E learning: Our members have accessed 1,988 different courses through our eLearning licences. 752 of these were accessed through skills academy licences and 1,236 through Nursing times access. Engagement with eLearning continues to grow.

HSC Trust partnerships: In each Trust, local UNISON reps are involved in education/learning groups. The nature of these varies from Trust to Trust and UNISON has a number of seats on each one. The focus of these partnerships is widening participation and developing new pathways for staff to progress in areas such as essential skills.



Our K102 programme is hosted through this partnership and enables members time off to complete study days and the use of facilities on site for courses. It also offers administrative support in delivering the programme and paid places on the course.

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.

Table 12: UNISON College member courses and main topic, 1 Oct 2021 to 30 Sept 2022

Course	No. of sessions	No. of student places		
		Total	F	M
Protecting professional registration				
NMC Record keeping and accountability	1	7	4	3
Supporting yourself and others				
Bullying at work	1	10	4	6
Caring adults	1	4	3	1
Suicide First aid	1	9	8	1
Autism awareness	2	12	8	4
Dementia an introduction	1	6	4	2
Dignity at the heart of social care	2	20	19	1
Bereavement by suicide	1	3	3	0
Makaton Taster	2	20	20	0
Makaton Level 1	2	23	13	2
Makaton Level 2	1	5	5	2
First Aid	1	7	6	1
Supporting you in your job				
Parkinson’s Awareness	1	12	11	1
Foundation Module in Parkinson’s	1	11	10	1
Managing Challenging Behaviours in the classroom	2	37	2	35
Dementia – An introduction	1	5	5	0
Managing conflict in the workplace	2	27	23	4
Caring for the Unwell adult	1	12	10	2
Complex Wounds	1	6	5	1
Moisture Lesions	1	12	12	0
Interview skills for Classroom assistants	2	35	35	0
Interview skills for nursing degree	5	40	37	3
K102	24	100	90	10
K102 Application support	4	15	15	0
OET ILETS Preparation classes	42	101	61	40
Essential skills	2	17	6	11
Skills Academy – e learning course access by members	600	752	648	104
Nursing Times – e learning course access by members	30	1,236	1152	84
Pre-recorded lectures on 18 topics	18	196	183	13
Digital Skills				
Microsoft Word	6	56	3	54
Microsoft Excel	6	76	1	67
2021/22	757	2872	2406 (84%)	466 (16%)
2020/21	58	1209	624 (80%)	156 (20%)



There for you - Welfare services

UNISON NI Welfare Group: The Group met 3 times this year with 24 members (79% women) and 20 branches participating. The Group continues to encourage more branch welfare officers to attend meetings to share information and good practice.

There were 5 newly elected branch welfare officers following this year's branch AGMs and they have been invited to join the Group. The Welfare AGM is scheduled for 29 November 2022 and will be an online event. An invitation had been extended to new Head of UNISON Welfare, Abigail Coombs, to attend a meeting in 2023.

Several Group members attended the There for You AGM in Brighton in June. The event took place during UNISON NDC and NI branches were commended for their generous donations during 2021.

4 Group members attended the branch welfare officer training this year and 3 undertook mentoring training in order to support those newly elected to this role.

Branch donations: Despite being the smallest region in terms of membership, our branches donated £52,320 to There for You - the 2nd highest amount of any region. The Group is encouraging all branches to sign up to the UNISON lottery fundraiser or to make a regular monthly donation to the charity.



Grants received: UNISON NI members received a total of £119,195 from the There for You charity. This included the special COVID grant, financial assistance claims, winter fuel and school uniform grants.

The Welfare Group is supported by Senior Secretary, Liz Robinson.

UNISON Living - Financial Services

Pandemic restrictions resulted in none of our UNISON living partners visiting NI during 2021/22. A number of them did, however, continue to offer support via online sessions or by sending emails and promotional materials.



UNISON Protect (formerly UIB) supplied our branches with updated materials on products to support recruitment and retention activity. This included the UNISON Prepaid cashback card and UNISON Rewards (online shopping with cashback). The region sent out a Free £5000 Accidental Death Insurance promotional email in February. This was

accessed by nearly 1,000 members. The following UNISON Protect NI policies were sold between 1 Oct 2021 and 31 Aug 2022.

UNISON Protect NI policies sold	1 Oct 2021 – 31 Aug 2022
Free £5,000 accidental death	1,821
Accident Protection Plan	24
50+ Accident Plan	29
Life Cover	75
Rewards	243
Prepaid	30
Total:	2,222

LV advised that travel to regions has restarted. Many NI delegates visited the LV stand at NDC and Colette Baker has issued some all-member mailings along with social media adverts which proved very successful. There was a 32% increase of policies held in NI after this.

Lighthouse continued to support members in NI with services delivered by a team of local advisers. Advisers are delivering seminars and webinars, as well as undertaking individual appointments.



A new webinar 'Navigating the Financial Squeeze' was developed to assist with the challenging situation members are facing. Branches were invited to make direct contact with Lighthouse if they wanted to take part.

Lighthouse also continued to offer the full range of topics for presentations; including 'pensions' and 'redundancy' webinars, as well as the popular 'retirement and pensions explained' webinar. A summary of activity in 2021/2022 is listed below.

Event Type	No. of Events	No. of Attendees
Seminar	3	63
Telephone Surgery	12	20
General Surgery	5	45
Webinars	5	45
Total	25	173
Total number of additional appointments		96

Abbey Autoline continued to offer support to our branches throughout 2022 and have reported 9346 motor policies and 1321 home policies sold since Nov 2021.

Legal services

The following is an update report from our solicitors Thompsons to the end of August 2022 on cases and activity.



■ UNISON Personal Injury Cases - Sept 2021 to Aug 2022

Table 13 - UNISON Personal Injury Cases from Sept 2021 to Aug 2022

	2021-2022	2020-2021
Cases received	187	116
Cases closed	158	158
Cases won	71	92
Cases lost	0	1
Cases discontinued/turned down	65	41
Cases where no contact from client	22	24
Turnaround time average	17 months	19 months
Damages	£688,834	£1,266,276
Average Damages	£9,702	£13,764

The following are some notable outcomes:

- **£7,000 for Catering Manager.** The member sustained injuries when they slipped on a wet floor and fell.
- **£40,000 for Nursing Assistant.** The member sustained serious injuries when they were assaulted by a patient.
- **£15,000 for Emergency Medical Technician.** The member was involved in a road traffic accident during the course of their employment.
- **£15,000 for Staff Nurse.** The member sustained whiplash type injuries when they were involved in a road traffic accident.

- **£9,000 for Domestic Assistant.** The member suffered injuries when they were struck by a cupboard which fell from the wall.
- **£11,000 for Catering Assistant.** The member sustained a cut when they came into contact with the sharp edge of a shelf during the course of their employment.
- **£10,000 for Care Assistant.** The member suffered a fracture to their finger when their hand became trapped between a wash basin and a trolley.
- **£10,000 for Catering Assistant.** The member sustained injuries when they caught their hand in a door with a faulty closing mechanism.

■ 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.

■ Extended legal services, training and events

Free wills service: Members were able to avail of the Free Wills Service.

Criminal Law: Criminal representation was provided for members by way of Zoom meetings and also 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 where required. We also advised members on a number of criminal queries which did not amount to police involvement.

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.

Training & events: Due to the pandemic, courses, seminars and events were able to take place by way of Zoom this year. Solicitors from

the ER and PI department provided services as tutors on courses organised by UNISON and provided speakers and information material for union seminars and events, including branch meetings to discuss particular aspects of union legal services.



OBJECTIVE 2: BARGAINING & BARGAINING FOR EQUALITY



Our bargaining and equality priorities

■ Ongoing Covid and the new normal

We have lived in a world where our ability to deliver to our members has been undermined by the absence of an Assembly, an Executive, and Ministers with designated budgets.

Our bargaining strategy and work in 2021/22, set against the background of continuing Covid, has been guided by the framework agreement secured at the end of the 2019/2020 dispute in health and the whole union's campaigns to secure decent pay awards.

UNISON's 'No going back to normal' campaign has been the foundation of all our campaign priorities and is reflected in our bargaining agenda at all levels. Domestic and international crisis have brought on a cost of living crisis impacting on all members. However, many were facing poverty before the current crisis.

Our bargaining teams: Workplace meetings have resumed but, with the continuing reality of Covid, we still work online and in hybrid settings.

In health, our negotiating teams are tackling the main service pressure points as they have emerged throughout the year.

In education, our negotiating teams are engaging effectively across all the directorates in the Education Authority.

In the private sector and the third sector, our negotiators are tackling employers one by one. The challenge is extensive with members located across over 1000 employers.

This work has been strengthened by effective partnerships between lay and staff negotiators and by joint branch and cross-sectoral working.

Maintaining our equality, consultation and negotiating rights: Despite the commitments in the New Decade, New Approach (NDNA) agreement, brokered before the return of the Executive in 2020, Government Departments

and most employers continue to side-step their responsibilities to equality screen and impact assess proposed changes and new policies. We have mounted several challenges on Section 75 breaches. We have challenged the health and education negotiating structures to prioritise their equality obligations and we are due to embark on renewed engagement with the relevant equality managers.

Through the service groups, we are reminding negotiators that Regional Council made equality training mandatory for all UNISON reps engaged in negotiations with employers.

The Declaration of Intent, signed off by ICTU and all main employers organisations, is on the table in the main negotiating bodies but not yet given the priority it needs. The agreement is primarily designed to tackle sectarianism in the workplace but also covers all Section 75 categories of potential discrimination.



We are currently assessing the impact of Long Covid. We continue to review workplace policies on sickness absence schemes in order to ensure continuing protection and support for workers.

Widening inequality for our members, as a result of low pay; deepening poverty; absence of workers' rights, particularly in the private sector; institutional discrimination; and the impact of disturbing changes in immigration rules, are all issues for both the bargaining agenda and our direct policy engagement with the NI Government.

Other key bargaining demands, now enhanced by the Women's Policy Group NI Feminist Recovery Plan, continue to be:

- a reversal of the neglect of social care workers, mostly women;
- implementation of agreed policies secured on women's rights including menopause, domestic violence and period poverty. We continue to raise questions on the provision of abortion services, seek pay audits with the focus on equal pay and the gender pay gap;
- implementation of the key demands from the expert groups that are working on the equality strategies;
- enhanced protection for our black and migrant workers and against the adverse impact of immigration rules and EU exit;
- enhanced training for staff at all levels - challenging racism, misogyny, homophobia, and sectarianism;
- implementation of Disability Action Plans across the public sector in the key areas of selection, recruitment and training;
- implementation of the commitments in NDNA on the living wage and action to promote rights and eliminate discrimination; and
- equivalence with the new EU Directive on minimum wage and collective bargaining.

■ Pay campaigns

Health: At the conclusion of the Agenda for Change pay agreement, UNISON sought the continuation of collective bargaining on pay. Substantial efforts were made to form a common claim across the four NHS jurisdictions for 2022/23. A new pay claim demanding an inflation busting pay rise has formed the main basis of our campaigning work on pay in 2022.



In late 2021, UNISON led the joint health unions in NI to secure an additional uplift to the 3% PRB recommendation. An unconsolidated uplift of 1.5% to 0.5%, weighted in favour of the lower paid, gave some respite to our frustrated membership.

The announcement in 2022 of the PRB recommendation of £1400 to pay band 7 made our members determined to seek a better deal. The cost of living crisis has fuelled that determination. However, this will not be easy to achieve in the absence of an Executive and a failure by the Treasury to provide funding for

the PRB recommendation (unlike Agenda for Change Refresh).

Resolution will require the return of Government, as it did at the end of our health strike in 2020 when we restored pay parity and now face it being broken again. At the time of writing, the Caretaker Minister for Health has indicated he will meet the PRB figure, but he has no authority to pay it.

On 27 October 2022, our members in health and social services will be balloted on strike action. The service group is urging a yes vote. Detailed arrangements are in place for direct engagement with the membership to encourage them to support the service group call for industrial action and to secure a high turnout.

Social Care Forum: Due exclusively to UNISON's efforts, we have now secured the establishment of a Social Care Forum which will include a focus on pay and terms and conditions for workers delivering care in the homecare and care home sectors. There is currently discussion on finalising terms of reference and installing an independent chair. However, progress has been extremely slow during the year and has, at times, stalled completely. There is a need to ramp up our intervention on this issue and secure senior resources from the Department of Health to take charge.

Mileage subsidy issues: A significant issue for Trust and private sector homecare workers is the impact of the energy crisis on the value of the subsidies they receive for travel in their job. Rising cost of fuel put real pressure on their capacity to pay out for fuel costs weeks in advance of receiving the actual subsidy from their employer.

Following UNISON mobilisation of the workforce at employer and community level, the Minister moved to approve the subsidy above 3,500 miles. This is currently under review and it will in no way remove the cost pressures on our members. We will continue to press Trusts to make local adjustments where needed and we are working with UNISON centre to improve the NHS allowance scheme.



The agency spend scandal: The pay dispute in 2019, besides achieving the reinstatement of pay parity, also secured a framework agreement on tackling safe staffing and curbing the accelerating spend on agency cover. UNISON has led joint health union interventions on these two major issues. Our interventions on safe staffing are reported in Section 3.

Agency spend by Trusts has reached record levels and is a scandal. Workforce vacancies across all parts of the health service has emerged as one of the most serious burdens on patients and workers. Tackling this issue remains a key priority for UNISON. Our goal is to reinstate safe staffing levels based on a sustainable and stable permanent workforce. This can be funded from the agency spend.

We continue to demand:

- new procurement frameworks for agency use;
- a policy statement to be issued by the Minister to guide corporate structures across the health service in the reduction of agency use;
- a commitment by corporate health leaders to engage with trade unions in each organisation to achieve this aim.

Negotiations are ongoing with Health Trusts on the over reliance on agency workers and temporary contracted staff, and on ending the casualisation of the workforce.

We continue our work with the Belfast and South Eastern Trusts on the review of the admin workforce. Admin posts covered by agency contracts have been converted to temporary posts for staff, and in the months ahead we will be seeking to convert those temporary contracted posts into permanent jobs.

In the Southern Trust, work has begun on converting 50 agency roles within support services to permanent posts.

In tackling nursing agency spend across all Health Trusts, we have secured enhanced critical shift payments for nursing staff in areas such as intensive care units. The reduction and reliance of agency workers in nursing is critical to ensuring safety for both patients, staff and continuity of care.

Private homecare: In homecare there is a continuing and growing reliance on the private sector. 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. This is ongoing work, particularly on our demand for a common public procurement policy.

Education: The NJC pay offer 2022/23 has been accepted by our members following the recent consultative ballot. We are awaiting the results of the ballots by other unions before we approach the education employers to implement.

We are also pushing ahead on the EA commitment to undertake a pay and grading review. The goal on trade union side is to reduce the number of NJC spinal points which EA uses in its pay structure. There is now general agreement on the profile of a business case to be submitted to the Department of Education to secure funding. The absence of an Executive and the presence of a Caretaker Minister makes it extremely difficult to make progress on this issue. Our members remain determined and ready to take industrial action if and when required.

A very specific pay issue is the collapse of differentials between supervisory and core staff in cleaning and catering. UNISON has formally asked for an interim arrangement to address this issue. We are responding to a growing exit of key supervisory staff and have raised serious concerns that this will undermine the services in the long run.

We have consulted with our members about stepping up this campaign and received an

overwhelming mandate to take these issues forward.

Further Education: Negotiations are ongoing with the Colleges to stay within the framework of the NJC. A local claim on the cost of living crisis has been lodged at the non-teaching side of the FE Colleges Staff Negotiating Committee. Return to the workplace plans are being drawn up and work is ongoing on a hybrid working policy.

Cost of living crisis – JTUS local claim for Libraries NI: Joint trade union side met with management to discuss the ongoing cost of living crisis and have now formally lodged a claim. This includes:

- all grades to move up 2 spinal column points;
- a reduction in the working week to 35 hours with no salary decrease;
- cost of living payment of £1,000 net;
- 2 days' additional leave;
- improvements to mileage rates;
- a commitment to maintain pay above the Real Living Wage going forward

■ Pursuing the UNISON agenda

A key priority in 2022/23 continues to be one of responding to significant developments in the health, education, community, voluntary and private sectors on challenges to our members' rights and trade union rights - including recognition and the establishment of collective bargaining.

Health and social services sector: As emphasised in last year's report it is essential that we monitor and protect our hard won right to influence decisions before they are taken.

Governance and management of the health service is now in the hands of the senior civil service team. We are working our way through the implications of this and are challenging on whether the Restart programme is being used as a smokescreen to implement changes to the democratic and governance structures to the detriment of the service and our members.

Engagement with nursing sector structures: We maintain our regional representation on the Central Nursing and Midwifery Advisory Committee and the NI Professional Education Council.



NHS Pensions: Discussion on specific remedies to pension scheme adjustments in NI was delayed by the absence of analysis but will now restart. UNISON's rep on the Pension Scheme Advisory Board, Roberta Magee has retired and we thank her for her services. She is replaced by Stephanie Greenwood.

Education sector: Since schools reopened in September 2022, our bargaining team is working to protect and secure employment rights and health and safety standards for our members who work as classroom assistants, and in school transport, cleaning, catering, estates and youth services.



Emerging issues in 2022 are:

- blended contracts for classroom assistants;

- increased responsibility of supervisory staff in catering and cleaning without proper reward;
- the need for a framework recognition agreement with the ever growing integrated sector (all individual employers);
- growing concern around resources for EA youth services;
- implication of the Brazil judgement on the calculation of annual leave for term time workers.

Challenging privatisation: Regional Committee has established a working group to develop our challenges on the increased use of private medicine, the need to restore social care back in-house, and public facing campaigns on waiting lists and waiting times.

Examples of bargaining interventions with wider implications

Sleep-ins: UNISON is pursuing claims with the Industrial Tribunal against the five Health Trusts for all workers required to undertake sleep-ins to be paid the correct rate of pay. The case has been listed for Hearing in May 2023.

Mental Capacity Act: The delayed implementation of the Mental Capacity Act (2016) raised concerns for affected members in all the Trusts. Joint union intervention, led by UNISON, secured mitigating protocols and has brought the issue of staffing pressures and resources onto the regional bargaining table. UNISON is awaiting a review of the first year of implementation of compliance with the Mental Health Capacity Act.

Development of health service wide IT reform and upgrade: Department of Health plans on regional shared IT services, the Encompass programme (digitalisation of patient records) and HR PTS system revision are currently being monitored by health joint secretaries. Our UNISON teams have become more involved in these plans as they have emerged across the Trusts in the last few months. A regional briefing has already been held and another will be held by year end on all these issues for staff and lay leads.



■ Pay uplifts and other successes

Agenda for Change Pay Max/Refresh: As part of our AFC Pay Max/Refresh strategy, UNISON branches in each Health Trust have had many successes in securing increased re-banding outcomes for staff through the AFC Changed Job Process. Some of these successes are detailed below.

- In **Belfast Health Trust**, this involved hundreds of staff moving up the pay bands and included security staff, ward clerks and

support service supervisors. Our work continues with the Belfast Trust on seeking re-banding for other groups including admin and clerical staff, caterers, cleaners, healthcare assistants and domiciliary care staff

- In **South Eastern Health Trust**, domiciliary care workers were successful in moving from Band 2 to the top of Band 3. Other successes for staff include emergency

department admin workers moving from a Band 2 to Band 3 and security and estates staff moving up to Band 3. Work is continuing on re-evaluating patient experience posts and admin posts across the Trust.



- In **Southern Health Trust**, work is ongoing for 20 groups of staff on re-evaluating their job roles under the 'changed job' process. This includes a number of different posts such as electricians, plumbers, support workers, admin, and domiciliary care supervisors as well as the homecare reablement team.
- In **Northern Health Trust**, staff across several areas, including Pharmacy staff and staff in the community treatment services, have had their posts upgraded to a higher pay band.
- In **Western Health Trust**, work is ongoing with job evaluations for a range of staff including domiciliary care and reablement staff. Omagh and Fermanagh branch successfully negotiated a Covid 19 recognition payment for staff employed by MITIE in the South West Acute Hospital.

In the **NI Ambulance Service Trust**, the NIAS branch successfully negotiated a 6 week rostering system for relief staff supported by a written Standard Operating Procedure. A process has also been initiated with NIAS to convert agency vehicle cleaning operative (VCO) roles into permanent posts within the organisation. This resulted in 20 VCOs gaining permanent employment with the Trust.

Work continues with NIAS to directly employ staff for all VCO roles. The NIAS Branch has also ensured that there will be no reduction in

temporary station supervisor positions (which were required to support the increasing demands on the service) until a review of operational structures and service demand is completed by the Trust.

Gillian Foley has been nominated by the Health Service Group to take the social care registrants seat on the **NI Social Care Council**.

The **Health and Social Care Board** ceased to exist on 1st April 2022. Our members have now successfully transferred their employment to BSO under the TUPE transfer regulations.

UNISON successfully negotiated a new hybrid working policy with the **Business Services Organisation**. This policy began on 1 September 2022 and enables staff to apply to work from home for up to three days a week, reducing to two days a week in January 2023.

In **homecare** negotiations with Strabane and District Caring Services, we secured an increase of 8p to mileage rates and a £2 increase to the hourly rate for Domiciliary Care workers.

In July 2022, the remaining 29 **care homes** owned by Four Seasons were transferred to the new owner, Beaumont Care Ltd. We ensured that all staff transferring from Four Seasons to Beaumont Care had their terms and conditions of employment protected under TUPE regulations and that recognition with UNISON would continue under the new ownership.

In the **community & voluntary sector** we secured full pay protection for staff self-isolating or shielding due to Covid with organisations such as Apex Housing, Newington Housing Association, Women's' Resource and Development Agency and First Housing Support Services.

In negotiations with Apex Housing, we secured an interim pay award of 6% for support staff and direct labour staff to deal with the rising costs of living. We have also reached agreement on a job evaluation scheme and a programme of job evaluation for the support staff and direct labour staff.

We have been involved with the Simon Community NI on reviews on a number of policies including disciplinary, grievance, managing attendance and honoraria policies. Staff also received a 2% pay award, enhanced pay rates for overtime as part of a pilot and the payment of NISCC Registration fees for all staff.

Negotiations are ongoing with DePaul Ireland on their services review and a new service delivery model. This will involve changes to how services are delivered, the management structure, and job roles for all staff. UNISON have ensured there will be no compulsory redundancies. We will be seeking to ensure that staff are appropriately paid and rewarded with the move to new job roles.

A pay claim has been submitted to the Board of Age NI to raise the lowest rate of pay of £9.50 per hour to the Real Living Wage of £9.90. We are awaiting the Board's decision.

UNISON campaigned and lobbied the Department for Communities (DfC) for a £500 covid payment to recognise the dedication and commitment of workers in the community and voluntary sector during the pandemic. Funded by DfC and administered by NIHE, a £500 covid recognition payment was introduced for workers employed in Supporting People programmes. Approximately 4000 Supporting People workers have now received the £500 payment.

Local Government pay & conditions claims:

We were party to a joint trade union 'pay and conditions claim' that has been submitted to both Mid & East Antrim Council and the NI Library Authority. The claim included staff moving up the spinal points, improvement in mileage rates and a cost of living recognition payment.

The claim with the Council was settled with staff receiving an increase in their spinal points backdated to 2022 with a further spinal point increase from 1 April 2023 along with a

commitment from the Council to develop an appropriate job evaluation model. Negotiations are ongoing with the Library Authority.

Higher Education: UNISON succeeded in negotiations with the Ulster University to adjust the contract to require payment of the real living wage for workers in Noonans and Compass. This has resulted in staff receiving an increase from £9.50 to £9.90 per hour with the implementation of the real living wage rate in September. Further negotiations are starting with the University regarding the recent announcement by the Real Living Wage Foundation of the rise to £10.90 per hour over the coming year

Members at St Mary's University College voted to take Industrial Action as part of the National Higher Education Pay Dispute. Using the leverage of the live ballot for industrial action, we negotiated an improvement on the offer locally. The lowest pay grade has been removed and our members move to Grade 2.

This represents an additional 2.3% for 2022 with a cumulative additional increase of 5.4% by the time they reach point 7 in 2024. In total, the lowest paid members received a 11.3% pay increase for 2022, moving up to 14.4% as they move through the increments.



OBJECTIVE 3: CAMPAIGNING, PUBLIC POLICY & SUPPORTING THE PEACE PROCESS



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. During the current cost of living crisis facing our members, effective 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 cost of living crisis;
- 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 the oldest and most vulnerable, 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;
- targeting social need so that no one gets left behind.

Current political context

Despite our optimism about the return of the NI Executive in January 2020, with the 'New Decade, New Approach' agreement, it was short-lived.

Following the resignation of First Minister Paul Givan in February 2022, in a bid to influence the UK Government on the Protocol, Stormont once again collapsed.

During its short life, the previous administration failed in large part to deliver on critical elements of the NDNA agreement, primarily due to the continuous exercise of veto by the DUP.

During that period, UNISON engaged extensively with all Ministers who were prepared to meet with us. We gave evidence to a wide range of Assembly committees and participated in direct UNISON lobbies. Through ICTU and with our allies we engaged on our union's agenda on economic and social rights, equality and human rights and on the need to properly resource public services and the pay and conditions of public service workers.

The NDNA agreement contained action plans on a number of areas we had actively campaigned on, but implementation was consistently stalled.



The scheduled Assembly elections took place in May 2022. Regional Committee and our branches organised hustings to challenge the candidates on the unfinished business on our union agenda. We secured commitments from most parties. However, post the election, the Stormont Government has remained suspended for the past 8 months and we are now facing the prospect of yet another election.

We are equally concerned not only at the lack of real commitment by the UK Government to the core provisions of our Peace Agreement, but also by its irresponsible and provocative actions in bringing forward legislation to dismantle core elements of it.

In section 3 we report, in more detail, on the NI Legacy Bill currently making its way through Westminster. Our opposition to the Bill was a UNISON motion to the ICTU Biennial Conference in October 2021. It sparked a major debate and was adopted unanimously. The Bill is opposed by all political parties here - by the trade union movement, by victims, by the majority of civil society, and by the international community. It is remarkable that

the UK Government is pressing ahead on an issue which commands such unprecedented levels of political and community opposition. We believe that this is an indication of contempt for our Peace Agreement and for the people of NI.

All the signs are that the new UK Government under Liz Truss is even more right-wing than its predecessor. This has major implications for the future of our public services, our members' jobs, workers' rights, equality and human rights in general and our Peace Process in particular. This is a time for increased vigilance and for direct action.

■ The impact of exiting the EU

As we have previously reported, the impact of EU exit will be felt throughout the membership. The work needed to secure protection for our members' rights and livelihoods is extensive and ongoing.

A key concern of UNISON, as the UK has exited the EU, has been to ensure that the rights of our members are protected. EU law underpins a range of key workers' rights in NI, and outside of the EU there is a risk that these rights can be undermined. The UK will no longer be required to develop laws in line with developments at the EU level. UNISON is clear that rights must not only be protected as they stand, but must also develop over time in line with progressive changes at the EU level.



Within the NI Protocol, the UK committed to the non-diminution of some rights contained within the Good Friday Agreement as a result of exiting the EU. The Protocol further

provides for the establishment of a 'Dedicated Mechanism' comprised of the NI Human Rights Commission and NI Equality Commission to monitor the implementation of these commitments.

Alongside ICTU and our allies across the rights and equality sector, we are regularly engaging with the new Dedicated Mechanism to direct its attention towards issues of concern.

A key focus of our work moving forward will be the impact of the new **Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill** that is currently before the UK Parliament. This Bill will set a countdown, through a 'sunset clause,' for the ending of vital protections currently referred to as 'retained EU law' by the end of December 2023 unless action is taken to preserve them.

We will be working alongside NIC-ICTU and our allies across civic society to ensure that the Bill does not lead to the removal or weakening of key protections for workers here. We will be highlighting the need for full consideration to be given to the non-diminution commitments contained in the NI Protocol. We are already working to inform the wider UNISON response to the Bill.

We continue to call for the introduction of a **NI Bill of Rights** that could protect rights based on EU law moving into the future.

The **Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA)** sets out the future relationship between the EU and UK. Whilst this contains some limited commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights by the UK, the TCA provisions on the 'level playing field' only relate to not lowering current levels of labour and social protections to the extent that any reductions may affect trade or investment.

UNISON has endorsed the **Common Travel Area campaign**, alongside the Northwest Migrant Forum. The campaign aims to raise awareness about the CTA, and to challenge discrimination against non-CTA nationals living, working and studying across both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. The campaign is calling on both the UK and Irish Governments to extend the rights under the CTA to all legal residents across both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.

■ Economic strategy

NI budget: In December 2021, the Finance Minister published a draft 3-year NI Executive budget (2022 – 2025) for consultation. This budget, however, was not adopted before the Executive ceased to operate in February 2022, and remains in draft form.

The draft budget was proposed as a multi-year budget, as opposed to a single year budget for public services. However, whilst the draft budget provided for an increase in spending for health and social care, this increase was to be funded by reducing spending across other Government Departments.

In the absence of an agreed Executive budget, funding for public services continues based on funding for the previous year. The Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI) has highlighted that rapidly rising inflation affects the provision of government services as it affects households. If increases in public spending do not match inflation, they are in effect real-terms cuts, which could lead to major real-terms reductions in spending.

As part of our UNISON Assembly election manifesto, UNISON called for a new Programme for Government to be linked to an agreed multi-year budget. We continue to call for 'No Going Back' to the social and economic conditions caused by over a decade of austerity pre-pandemic.

We have called on all parties within a new Executive to commit to seek resources for public spending in NI, which:

- allows Government to invest in our public services so they can be rebuilt;
- that ensures decent pay for workers;

- addresses sustained levels of poverty; and
- builds a fairer and more equal society.

Cost of Living campaigning: A key message we delivered during our Assembly election campaigning was that workers and their families deserve better during the cost of living crisis.



UNISON was at the forefront of the NIC-ICTU demonstration held at Stormont on 25 June calling for action to deal with the cost of living crisis workers and their families face. We intend for UNISON to play a lead role in the NIC-ICTU 'Workers Demand Better' campaign calling for action to address the cost of living crisis.

Across the whole union, major campaigning on the cost of living crisis is underway. The 'Together we rise' campaign, launched at NDC 2022, is calling for interventions to address the crisis, and features an advertising and social media campaign. We intend to take the opportunity through the campaign to press political parties and Government for the interventions needed to address the crisis in NI, focusing particularly on pay. We will link our activities to the ongoing NIC-ICTU Campaign.

■ Public Procurement Policy

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.

We continue to campaign for 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.

In November 2021, the Finance Minister launched the Executive **Scoring Social Value policy** and stated that from June 2022 any company delivering services for government will have to pay staff working on that contract the real Living Wage as calculated by the Living Wage Foundation.



The Foundation subsequently announced that it was bringing forward the announcement of the 2022-23 Living Wage to September 2022 in response to the cost-of-living crisis, setting the new 2022-23 rates at £10.90.

The Scoring Social Value policy sets out that tenders for public contracts must be assessed on the basis of social value as well as cost and quality, with some social values measures, including 'fair work' practices, being mandatory.

The 'fair work' practices include compliance with relevant employment, equality and health and safety law and human rights standards; adherence to relevant collective agreements; and the adoption of fair work practices as defined by the Carnegie Trust, which includes pay, terms and conditions and worker voice/representation.

The Scoring Social Value policy is a NI Executive policy and is mandatory for Government Departments and Non-Departmental Public Bodies. The policy makes clear that any additional costs arising from this condition should be built into business cases. The policy further requires continual monitoring of the delivery of the social value included in public contracts.

Working alongside our bargaining structures, we have immediately sought to ensure that the policy is applied and implemented in relation to social care procurement, engaging with the Trusts, the Department of Health and calling for this to be a priority for the Social Care Fair Work Forum.

Ensuring ethical procurement is undertaken in relation to social care services was further highlighted in our response to the consultation on the reform of adult social care.

As discussed further below, UNISON represents NIC-ICTU on the Co-Design Group established by the Minister for Communities to inform the development of an Executive Anti-Poverty strategy. Our interventions here have related to full implementation of the Scoring Social Value policy as part of a range of measures needed to reduce in-work poverty.

■ Employment and trade union law

As part of the New Decade, New Approach agreement in 2020, political parties agreed to an “enhanced focus within the Programme for Government on creating good jobs and protecting workers’ rights”. Parties agreed to progress several actions, including a commitment to the NI Executive becoming a Living Wage employer, to ban zero hours contracts and to devolve powers to set minimum wage levels.

We engaged with the relevant Assembly committees and Ministers on these key areas. We nearly made it on some, but the collapse of Government has set all of this back.



Whilst some progress was made on securing the Living Wage, much more needs to be done to protect and enhance workers’ rights. The trade union demand is that the real Living Wage be the minimum rate of pay across all public sector employment, and across all procurement, grant aid or sub-contracting activity that is undertaken. This should be supplemented by an effective strategy to monitor and, where necessary, enforce such pay rates.

Progress on the above was blocked by successive Ministers for the Economy. We are pursuing this through ICTU, where our agenda includes the demand for the right to collective bargaining for all workers.

In order to protect workers’ rights, we pressed the Executive to recognise the impact of EU Exit in this area. EU law has long underpinned a range of key employment and anti-discrimination laws.

There are clear signs that the UK Government is seeking to weaken these rights. Our demand of a NI Bill of Rights would afford protection. In addition the Withdrawal Agreement and the Protocol commit to non-diminution of rights.

As reported last year, we engaged through ICTU on the Private Members’ Bill on trade union freedoms, which fell at its second stage reading in March. Another Private Members’ Bill, the Employment (Zero Hours Workers and Banded Weekly Working Hours) Bill, did not seek to ban zero hours contracts entirely but provided for a ‘banded hours’ approach. We gave evidence as part of ICTU in support of the Bill. It was a move in the right direction for our members in precarious and casual employment. Although the legislation did not have time to fully progress in the last mandate, a new Executive should move to build on this Bill by prohibiting zero-hours contracts as set out in NDNA.

Collective bargaining coverage across NI remains low, and there are stark differences in coverage between public and private sector employers. Collective bargaining rights should be strengthened through legislation that will also require action to increase levels of coverage.

At the time of writing this report, the EU Council of Ministers has signed the minimum wage and collective bargaining directive into law. We require the return of Government here to introduce similar legislation.



A priority demand of the trade union movement for a new Executive is to take forward strong, comprehensive employment legislation for NI, giving effect to commitments made under NDNA.

■ The climate emergency, environment and just transition

Regional Council 2022 will debate motions on the climate emergency, environment and just transition. The next decade will prove critical in the fight against climate breakdown. UNISON campaigns for greener politics, working with employers to make workplaces more sustainable and engaging on climate issues with members.



All UNISON members in their roles across health and social care, education, housing and the community and voluntary sector will see the effects of environmental change, whether this is pollution, extreme weather, floods or cold homes. In this context, members and activists have a crucial role to play in making our vital public services greener and fighting for a just transition to a low carbon and sustainable economy.

This year, the NI Assembly finally passed long-awaited climate legislation. The Climate Change Act 2022 sets a new target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Act also mandates the publication of sectoral plans and setting of carbon budgets, as well as the establishment of an independent NI Climate Commissioner and a Just Transition Commission.

This represents an opportunity to shape a fair and just transition locally, with poverty and social justice at its core. We will be working to ensure strong trade union representation on the new Just Transition Commission.

Last year, UNISON published a report that set out a path to decarbonise the UK's public services. Public service decarbonisation will require capital investment of around £140bn up to 2035. To date, the UK Government has only committed £8.2bn towards public services decarbonisation.

Funds must be set aside specifically for public service decarbonisation, rather than diverting money from already-underfunded public services or relying on private investment. Local government budgets are stretched, but the future of our planet depends on this vital investment.

Funding must be directed to relevant government departments, local councils and the NI Housing Executive, alongside statutory powers to begin decarbonisation of public buildings and social housing. Public procurement social provisions should be modernised to boost green and decarbonisation outcomes, reducing emissions in supply chains.

Regional Committee continues to encourage all of our activists to explore green initiatives with their employers, getting their workplace to declare a climate emergency and asking employers to establish a green budget. Green UNISON week in September provided an opportunity for our members to learn more about campaigning on environmental issues. A UNISON NI Green UNISON Network has been started and we intend to organise webinars on climate and environmental issues over the coming months.



At this year's National Delegate Conference, a rule change was agreed to enable the election of a branch Environmental Officer (also known as a Green rep) to co-ordinate the branch's green and environmental agenda. Regional Committee is working with our branches to develop these roles. We want public sector employers to give agreed workplace facility time for Environmental Officers to negotiate on just transition and decarbonisation plans.

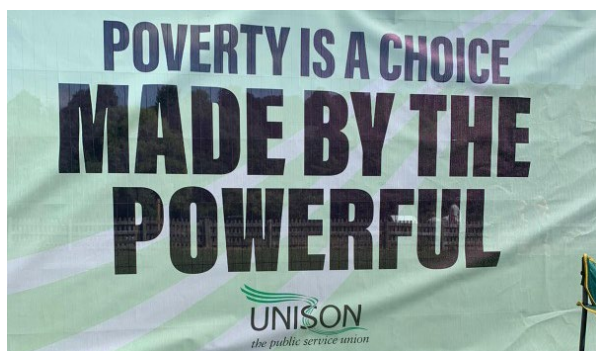
Low pay, poverty and targeting social need

■ Challenging poverty and welfare reform

UNISON plays a key role in the campaign to eradicate poverty and we continue to work with our allies including CAJ, the NI Anti-Poverty Network, and the Cliff Edge Coalition.

Cost of living crisis: The impact of the cost of living crisis is felt across our membership, particularly amongst the lowest paid. Record levels of inflation and rising costs of food, fuel and energy place our members and their families in an increasingly difficult position, with their pay not keeping pace to match. This reality faced by our members informs all of our policy and campaigning work and underpins the actions UNISON called on political parties to take during the Assembly election campaign.

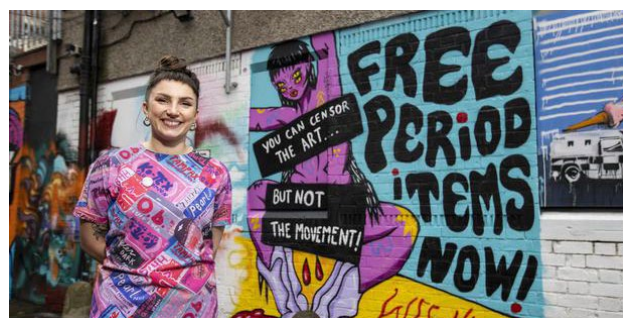
We were the main union marching on Stormont in June 2022 and we will be a major participant in the ICTU campaign on the cost of living crisis. We are currently making preparations for a Westminster lobby of NI MPs. This will include challenging them on the need to restore the NI Executive at this critical time.



Anti-Poverty Strategy: The current cost of living crisis underlies the critical importance of urgent agreement and implementation of a robust Anti-Poverty Strategy, that can provide the systemic change needed across society to fully address poverty.

UNISON represents NIC-ICTU on the Co-Design Group established by the Minister for Communities to inform the development of an Executive Anti-Poverty strategy. In March 2021, the Minister published reports from four 'Expert Advisory Panels' to help inform the development of a series of new social inclusion strategies for NI, including an Anti-Poverty Strategy. The reports contain far reaching

recommendations, which, if enacted, provide a blueprint to help transform NI into a more equal, rights-based society. The trade unionists and other civil society representatives on these groups are striving to ensure that the expert recommendations are fully incorporated into the final strategies.



In relation to the development of Strategy, our interventions have included:

- emphasising the importance of full implementation of the real Living Wage;
- increasing collective bargaining coverage, and ending precarious work, including through banning zero-hours contracts;
- supporting calls for the introduction of measures on childcare, a new child payment; and
- maintaining and enhancing welfare mitigations and the supports available through the social security system.

Our UNISON 'Free School Meals for All' campaign is a further important intervention aimed at reducing poverty for our members and their families.

Whilst development of a draft Anti-Poverty Strategy remains ongoing, in the absence of an Executive it cannot proceed to be publicly consulted upon and adopted. In the interim we continue to urge officials to move as swiftly as possible to progress the strategy's development in readiness for an incoming Executive.

"Cliff edge" - Ending of welfare mitigations:

UNISON is a member of the Cliff Edge Coalition – a group of over 100 organisations from across NI which came together to campaign for the extension of welfare mitigations beyond March 2020.

The Coalition continues to highlight the negative impacts of a range of new welfare challenges since the original mitigations were introduced.

Whilst a 'cliff-edge' was avoided in relation to the existing welfare mitigations, most of which were extended earlier in the year until 2025, considerable work remains to move away from such 'cliff-edge' end dates entirely and to develop a social security system that is fit for purpose and protects against poverty. The current cost of living crisis has shown the importance of a strong and fair social safety net to allow people to live decent, healthy lives. Strengthening the mitigations package would help to tackle some of the new challenges that many people are facing.

The five-week wait before people receive their first Universal Credit payment leads to hardship, debt and increased reliance on food banks. Uptake of the Universal Credit Contingency Fund is low, suggesting difficulties in accessing payments and/or a lack of awareness of the Fund.

The child element of Universal Credit has replaced Child Tax Credit. Third (or additional) children born after 6 April 2017 now only qualify for Universal Credit support in a very small number of exceptional cases. The two-child limit affects more than 9,000 families in NI. Thousands more families will be affected in the coming years, leading to an inevitable rise in child poverty.

Cuts to housing benefit in the private rented sector have led to insecurity of tenure and

homelessness for many low-income households. Local housing allowance rates have been frozen since April 2021, and average rents have risen by 6.8% in the past year. There are significantly more households at risk of poverty after housing costs in the private rented sector in NI than in the social rented sector, where an effective infrastructure of support exists to help tenants. No such infrastructure exists for private tenants.



It is essential that the NI Executive is restored, to ensure that important protections for those on the lowest incomes can be secured during this cost of living crisis. In addition, the recent independent review of welfare mitigations report should be published.

NI Anti-Poverty Network: Thomas Mahaffy, Head of Organising, represents UNISON on the Board of the NI Anti-Poverty Network. In March 2022 it was awarded significant funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust to employ a full-time worker to rebuild and strengthen the Network and re-establish it as a critical voice for the anti-poverty sector in NI. A work programme is currently being developed with an AGM to follow in early 2023.



Childcare: ‘New Decade, New Approach’ committed to the introduction of a long overdue Childcare Strategy. The 2017 ICTU report ‘Childcare in NI – cost, care and gender equality’, makes comprehensive recommendations and has been the basis of our engagement with Government and our bargaining agenda with employers. We are currently awaiting the results from the Insight Labs undertaken in relation to the strategy which are due to be published by the Department of Education in December 2022.

At the most recent meeting of the All Party Group for Early Education and Childcare, the Department provided an update on the proposals for childcare provisions to be included within the Strategy. At present, 60% of children in their immediate pre-school year can

access a minimum of 12.5 hours of pre-school education per week, during term time. A core component of the Childcare Strategy will be a new proposal to offer every child in their pre-school year a minimum of 22.5 hours of pre-school education per week.

As part of the All Party Group for Early Education and Childcare and the Childcare for All Campaign, we continue to push 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 recognises the value of childcare through decent pay, terms and conditions for workers.

■ Working with the community & voluntary sector

We continue to work with NICVA, the umbrella organisation for the community and voluntary sector. Our engagement is primarily through the Equality Coalition; a number of ad-hoc groups dealing with the post-Brexit impact; and as a social partner with ICTU.

Our campaign of opposing cuts to the **Supporting People** Programme continues. This programme provides vulnerable people with support to live independently in the community, including through the provision of specialist housing or hostels.

This year, we responded to the consultation on the proposed Draft Strategic Plan for Supporting People. We highlighted our concerns about the chronic underfunding of the programme and the adverse impact this has had on our members, particularly given the current proposed budget represents the sixteenth year in which an uplift to the Supporting People budget has not been provided.

We reiterated our calls for an independent, expert-led review into the Programme, with full UNISON involvement and engagement and outlined our position that any additional

funding or procurement model must be translated into better pay and terms and conditions for workers on par with NHS workers on Agenda for Change carrying out the same/similar roles. We also outlined our continued opposition to a Standardised Regional Payment Rate.



Through the written questions function of the Assembly, the Minister for Communities has stated that the Housing Executive advised that payments for approximately 4000 eligible staff have been forwarded to employers following the receipt of approved Recognition Payment claims which employers are then required to pass the payment onto employees through their own payroll process.

UNISON campaigns in health and education

■ Health and social services

Last year's report to Regional Council covered in detail the intensive engagement of the entire UNISON team at employer, departmental and government level, particularly our engagement on dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. That engagement continued throughout the last 12 months and was supplemented by a range of further policy responses and interventions.

At Regional Council, we will debate a motion on initiating a major campaign calling for the development of a public health model to deal with issues such as safe staffing, health inequalities and privatisation.

Response to Covid-19: We have continued at both local and regional level to ensure protection for our members who have now been confronting the pandemic for over two years. Responding to the pandemic has taken a tremendous toll on our members. We have ongoing engagement across the health and social care system on matters relating to the pandemic and the proposed transformation and rebuilding of services.

Safe Staffing legislation: We continue to work alongside other health trade unions to progress the development of safe staffing legislation, further to the commitments made by the Minister for Health in the 2020 Framework Agreement that led to the suspension of our industrial action on pay parity and safe staffing issues.

We have emphasized to the officials within the Department of Health working on this legislation that it should set clear duties in relation to workforce planning and investment and ensure clear reporting and accountability mechanisms. As part of our campaigning during the Assembly election, UNISON called on all parties to prioritise proper workforce planning across health and social care, urging them to move to introduce Safe Staffing legislation as early as possible in a new Assembly.

Regulation of Pharmacy Technicians: In May UNISON responded to a public consultation

on proposals to introduce statutory regulation and registration of the pharmacy technician workforce in NI, similar to the approach already taken in England, Scotland and Wales.

Whilst highlighting that UNISON does not oppose a move towards statutory regulation, we raised a number of issues on behalf of our members which require further detail and engagement with UNISON. These included clarity as to the type of training and qualification that will be required to register and the level at which fees will be set.

We have subsequently met with the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer and Departmental officials on these issues and others, with further engagement planned.



Reform of Adult Social Care: In July, UNISON responded to the DoH consultation on proposals to reform adult social care services in NI. This consultation followed on from the report - 'Power to People – Proposals to reboot adult care and support in NI'. The consultation process followed from representations made by UNISON at the Programme Board established to take forward the recommendations made by 'Power to People'.

In our submission, we reiterated our key calls for reform of the adult social care system. These included calling for the Social Care Fair Work Forum to play a major role in the reform process, particularly with regards to delivering real change for the workforce through ensuring decent pay and terms and conditions. UNISON highlighted our opposition to any move to introduce charging

for domiciliary care services further to a proposed review of this issue.

The consultation proposed a review of the 'mixed economy' of care, which provides for care to be delivered by both statutory and non-statutory services. UNISON highlighted our longstanding concerns on the privatisation of services, and called for services to be brought back 'in-house' as part of the reform process.

Raising a concern / Whistleblowing: In September, UNISON responded to the consultation on the regional HSC policy on raising a concern (also referred to as 'whistleblowing'). We highlighted the importance of effective staff training and awareness raising around raising concerns, the importance of supporting staff who raise a concern, and the need to ensure that investigations are undertaken within clear, set timeframes.

Violence and aggression in the workplace: In September, we responded to the consultation on the regional HSC framework on violence and aggression in the workplace. We emphasised that it is a matter of serious ongoing concern that staff working across HSC services are subject to violence and aggression.

UNISON reiterated the unacceptable nature of such incidents and called for maximum protection for those delivering vital public services. We called for effective measures to be put in place (including rebuilding 'in-house' security teams) to both prevent violence and aggression towards HSC staff and ensure that those who are responsible are held to account.

Review of Urgent and Emergency Care Services in NI: UNISON has engaged with Departmental officials on plans to reform urgent and emergency care services, both locally and regionally. The Department is seeking to implement an integrated urgent and emergency care system across all HSC Trusts, including a regional 'Phone First' service with a single number for service users in need of non-emergency urgent care. This will be accompanied by the establishment of

Urgent Care Centres and rapid access assessment and treatment services in all HSC Trusts. The GP Out of Hours service will be integrated into the wider urgent and emergency care service.

In our response, UNISON stressed the need for multi-year funding. Capacity must also be developed in other parts of the HSC, especially in General Practice and within social care in the community. We have stressed that any regional Phone First service should be accessible, simple and effective for all service users. We have also sought detail on how many Urgent Care Centres will be established and where these will be located.



The Department plans to introduce a regional, multi-professional workforce plan to deliver these new models of care. While workforce planning is a necessary step for such large-scale reform, UNISON is concerned that the root causes of persistent staff shortages remain unexplored. Until issues such as inadequate pay and working conditions are meaningfully addressed, the proposed regional workforce plan will do little to fill vacancies and deliver new models of care. It is also essential that proper workforce planning includes a focus on significantly reducing spend on agency staff.

We have questioned whether the review's strategic priorities will ensure that people across NI will have equal access to safe urgent emergency care services at the right time, in the right place. People from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds often face challenges in accessing primary care. Some present to Emergency Departments with nowhere else to turn. Primary care services must be strengthened in deprived areas, and barriers to access must be dismantled.

■ Education

We continued to engage with the Department and the Education Authority throughout the year on our priority policy and campaigns issues. Regional Council has set the framework for our interventions, to include an education system:

- that delivers to disadvantaged areas, is non-selective, and promotes equality;
- that challenges disadvantage and supports improvement by taking forward a new approach to the funding formula that not only restores recent cuts, but targets objective need and inequality;
- that provides free and nutritional meals for all pupils;
- 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 any plans to curtail Special Educational Needs services for pre-school children;
- that ensures that future area planning processes consider workforce issues.

Free School Meals for All: The free school meals working group, established by Regional Committee, has continued to take forward our campaign calling for universal free school meal provision for all children and young people. The campaign objectives are:

- to seek universal, nutritious, free schools meals for all pupils to both reduce poverty and improve public health;
- to safeguard and promote the vital work of our members within schools catering. School meals services should be publicly provided;
- as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, to build support for the implementation of a public health model across Government that is aimed at dealing with health and educational inequalities that have been exacerbated during the pandemic.

These objectives are supportive of actions being led within our bargaining structures –

primarily in education, but also in health, taking into account the key public health implications of free school meals.

Throughout the 2022 Assembly Election campaign, we engaged across political parties to outline the objectives of our campaign. Support for universal free school meals was a key question put to parties attending our hustings event and was a prominent part of the UNISON election manifesto.



As a direct result of our interventions, the issue of universal free school meals was raised in the party leaders debate and a number of parties have committed to exploring options for free school meals for primary school children and extending eligibility for the current free school meals scheme. Belfast City Council has also agreed to support the campaign.

As a result of our campaign, the former Education Minister Peter Weir initiated a review of free school meal and uniform grant eligibility criteria, with the option of providing universal free school meals to all or certain year groups to be considered. UNISON have played an active role in this review and have engaged with the Department to encourage the move towards a universal approach.

Whilst there have been delays in this process, we hope a public consultation exercise will begin before the end of 2022. During the consultation, the campaign will be focusing on maximising responses supporting a universal approach, and ensuring that our members and their families have the opportunity to have their voices heard.

Common Funding Formula: We continue to press for a different approach to the funding formula for schools that will both restore recent cuts, as well as targeting objective need and the inequality of outcomes. It is our position that the role of classroom, nursery and special needs staff must also be protected and strengthened.



The funding of education is complex, as are the governance arrangements. For this reason, we are summarising the funding system in our annual report for the benefit of branches and members.

A Guide to education funding in NI

The Common Funding Scheme for the local management of schools is the means by which the education budget is distributed. The total amount to be spent on schools is called the General Schools Budget (excluding special schools). It is made up of three specific categories of spending:

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

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

Area Planning: We continue to engage in the Area Planning process. We responded to the consultations on the Draft Strategic Area Plan and the Draft Strategic Plan for Special Education Provision in April 2022. We called for full ongoing engagement with trade unions, particularly in relation to the Special Education Strategic Area Plan. We highlighted our longstanding position that UNISON will give full support to anti-closure campaigns where we have substantial membership in a school that is threatened with closure, and there is demonstrable local community support for the school to remain open.

We have also made clear that in campaigning for increased resources for education services we are mindful that a key consideration of area planning is a school's financial situation. UNISON's position remains that it is important to consider the impact that years of austerity has had on local schools and their budgets. Schools should not be deemed unsustainable or face closure or merger because of austerity.



The EA has recently published 'Operational Plan 1' (2022-24) the first two-year plan outlining the area planning activity that it is intended will be taken forwards. UNISON will monitor this plan, particularly in relation to any development proposals which affect our members, and will ensure their interests are safeguarded within the area planning process.

The UNISON-led partnership projects

The UNISON NI Partnership Programme is led by Thomas Mahaffy on behalf of Regional Committee and is supported by relevant branch and staff members for each project. Union / employer partnership advisor, Pamela Dooley, continues to assist this work including the delivery of a bespoke partnership training programme for managers and union activists.

These UNISON-led partnerships are focused on delivering true inclusion, real equality of decision-making and increasing opportunities for frontline workers to have a direct voice in how quality care is delivered across our health and social services.



The history, principles and objectives that have underpinned them over the past 22 years can be found in the 'Time for Change' report www.unison-ni.org.uk/unison-led-partnerships.

In addition to progressing work on the following projects, we are currently assessing the potential for future collaborative work with other HSC Trusts.

■ UNISON / NIAS health & wellbeing partnership

Our priority within this partnership is to be a driver for health, wellbeing and cultural change within NIAS. In August 2022, a meeting of the partnership was held to review progress and achievements to date; identify issues that had stalled due to the pandemic; and scope out the future role for the Steering Group in the context of current service developments.

Progress, achievements and challenges were discussed under four key themes. These include

- staff engagement, participation, relationships and communications;
- culture change, including leadership training and skills development;
- equality and the empowerment of women workers;
- targeted health, wellbeing and mental health initiatives.



In addition to ongoing engagement with staff on health and wellbeing issues, activity has included further work with the HSC Leadership Centre to design a leadership development course and a manager skills programme. This is part of a 'cultural improvement' initiative and is focused on ensuring that managers have the proper communication and other skills to support the health and wellbeing of staff. Progress on a revitalised Women's Development Forum remains a priority and we continues to support the development of the Peer Support and other health and well-being initiatives.



During 2022/23, in addition to continuing to progress health and well-being activities across all areas within its scope, the partnership will be seeking:

- to establish a role for itself in ensuring that the physical and mental health of staff is core to strategic development within all NIAS directorates, including in the development of its Strategic Plan, Cultural Improvement Programme, and Health & Wellbeing Strategy;

- to facilitate the ongoing engagement of staff in the development and implementation of these strategies;
- to monitor the implementation of actions and achievement of outcomes across directorates;
- to continue its robust measurement framework linked to the common and/or joint interests and objectives of union and management;
- to continually engage with members, activists, staff and managers at all levels to identify key priorities and actions.

■ UNISON / Northern HSC Trust support services project

This project with the Northern HSC Trust continues to focus on improving communications and information sharing; team working within and across staff groups and with supervisors; recognition and respect; and health and wellbeing. These were the key issues of concern raised in the initial staff survey in 2017 and were raised again by staff in the staff engagement sessions held in 2021 to share experiences of the Covid working environment.



Activity this year has included:

- a newsletter to all support staff on the findings of the Covid staff engagement sessions (also translated into Polish);
- ongoing pressure to develop clearer communications channels, including facilities and platforms for support service staff to access emails and other Trust communications;
- pressure on senior managers to ensure regular and effective team meetings with staff input onto the agenda;

- commitment to a review of BICS training for domestic staff to ensure effective training and to open up the role of accredited BICS trainer to existing staff.



During 2023 the Steering Group will be reviewing progress and areas for future activity. Outstanding issues raised by staff include the need for the Trust:

- to develop solutions to support staff with childcare and those requesting homeworking;
- to increase access to health & wellbeing support, including a specific network for support staff;
- to recognise and respect the work of support staff;
- to ensure proper induction and H&S training for all new staff;
- to ensure that staff and managers have sufficient training to be confident and competent in their roles;
- to ensure that there are clear H&S policies and protocols in place and that they are properly enforced.

Equality and human rights

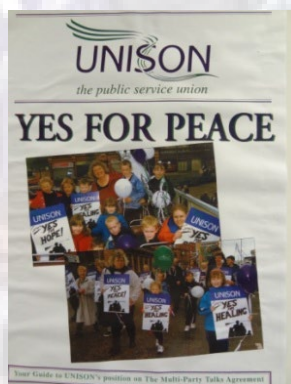
The Good Friday Agreement contained extensive commitments on equality and human rights. These permeated all 3 strands of the Agreement and the codes and operation of devolved Government. These commitments were central to UNISON support in the 1998 referendum.

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 rollback 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.

The 'New Decade, New Approach' agreement contained a range of commitments on human rights and equality strategies. Alongside our allies pressing for delivery of these commitments is a key priority of the Regional Committee.

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.

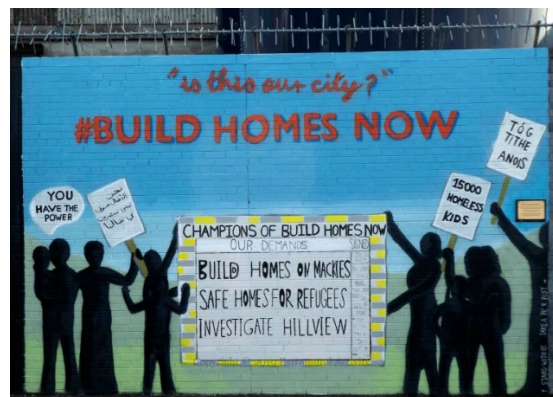


UNISON NI's influential 'Yes for Peace' leaflet was produced in 1998 in support of the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent Referendum

Housing: Two decades of austerity and underfunding of social housing has significantly contributed to the current housing crisis. Low-paid workers in the public sector are effectively excluded from home ownership, while around 44,000 households are currently on the waitlist for social housing. This has pushed more people into the private rented sector, where many landlords are selling up.

This is impacting negatively on supply and driving up demand. Average rents in the private rented sector have risen by 6.8% in the past year alone – the highest rate of change in the UK. As a result of these pressures, many people are living in poor quality accommodation unsuitable for the needs of their family or in housing that is unaffordable. In worst case scenarios, increasing numbers of people are faced with no choice but to present as homeless to the NI Housing Executive.

In the context of the emerging housing crisis and ongoing cost of living crisis, we engaged with the Department for Communities during its consultation on its new Housing Supply Strategy.



The Department sets out a key ambition to build at least 100,000 homes over the next 15 years, with at least a third of these being social homes. We believe that to date the Department has fallen far short of meeting housing need – especially *affordable* housing need.

We support PPR's 'Build Homes Now' campaign, which demands that publicly owned land should be used to build social housing. This is imperative in areas of highest objective need, including on the former Mackie's site in west Belfast.

We welcomed the Strategy's recognition that there must be a standalone housing outcome in a new Programme for Government. However, we believe that more can and should be done to tackle the issue of affordability, including restoring the link between Local Housing Allowance, housing benefit and the real cost of rent. 89% of tenants in the private rented sector experience a shortfall between Local Housing Allowance and market rents.

A statutory duty should also be placed on relevant public bodies (including housing, health, education and justice) to prevent and alleviate homelessness. There must be a focus on the prevention of homelessness, rather than a mere reduction of homelessness.

We expressed serious concerns about the Strategy's aim to "optimise access to alternative forms of public and private finance" to develop and deliver new housing. Private finance has no legitimate role in the development and delivery of affordable housing. Private developers and for-profit housing providers exist in order to extract value from the provision of housing.

A profit-seeking approach to housing impacts on the amount of land available for social and affordable housing and, therefore, the availability of social and affordable housing. The wider trade union movement has clear objections to the creeping privatisation of public housing, on the grounds that this only serves to undermine democracy and accountability.

Two decades of austerity and underfunding of the NI Housing Executive has significantly contributed to the current public housing crisis. Cutting public spending on social housing and turning to the private sector

instead is not the answer. Attempts to privatise public housing (including reclassifying the NIHE as a mutual, not-for-profit or cooperative entity) will ultimately undermine tenants' rights and result in a lack of oversight and scrutiny of decisions.

Trans Equality and Conversion Therapy: In October 2021, the UK Government launched a consultation on legislation to ban the practice of conversion therapy. Unfortunately, this legislation will not be implemented in NI. However, given that a motion to the Assembly calling on the Minister for Communities to introduce similar legislation here was passed in April 2021, it is anticipated that this will be brought forward in the next Assembly. With that in mind, we have begun work to support and shape this legislation.



Supporting our allies: UNISON continues to make a major contribution to the debate on equality and human rights. With the support of the Campaign Fund, we sponsor research, seminars, public demonstrations and engage in 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; the Women's Policy Group and Women's Budgeting Group; and the Practice and Participation of Rights in particular, and report on key developments below.

■ The Equality Coalition - Demanding an equality and right-based framework

The Equality Coalition is co-convened by UNISON and CAJ and has over 100 member organisations. A number of these are themselves umbrella groups and the largest and most diverse is the trade union movement. There has been, and remains, no other collective voice on equality in NI and no other overarching consistent 'critical friend' of the equality oversight bodies, public authorities, and local government. A key part of the Coalition's work centres on encouraging strict adherence to Section 75 equality duties.

With the lessening of Covid-19 restrictions in 2022, the Coalition has been able to increase its activity back to pre-pandemic levels, with events held regularly throughout this period.

Post-pandemic NI: Furthering our work from last year, we have made interventions aimed at ensuring inequalities are not exacerbated by the Covid-19 recovery measures and that the costs of the rebuilding from the pandemic are not borne by key workers and the most economically marginalised. This has included providing space at recent meetings for in-depth discussions between our members on how to respond to the cost of living crisis. This led to us playing a supporting role in the organisation of the 'Crushed by the Cost of Living Crisis' event at Stormont in September 2022.



Additionally, the Coalition has engaged directly with the Health Minister to call for an NI-specific inquiry into the handling of the pandemic. The Co-conveners (CAJ and UNISON) have already responded to the UK-wide Covid inquiry. We have also continued to engage with relevant bodies to ensure that the post-pandemic 'transformation' of the health service does not lead to increased privatisation and the centralisation of decision-making power.



Protecting rights and equality after Brexit:

The NI Protocol continues to be a high-profile political issue in NI, with concerns across the Coalition that a move to trigger Article 16 of the Protocol (or remove it altogether) will pose a significant risk of a rollback of rights protections. Into 2022, we continued to be active on this issue, including raising concerns related to the impact on workers' rights. We have also made interventions aimed at combating racial profiling within the Common Travel Area (CTA). The Coalition is also continuing to closely monitor the implementation of the UK commitment that there will be 'no diminution' of certain GFA rights as a result of Brexit.

Political engagement and the realisation of rights based power sharing: Despite further political instability, we have continued to press for the enactment of unimplemented rights-based commitments of the peace settlement to underpin sustainable power-sharing and governance in NI.

The Coalition Co-Conveners have met regularly with NI Executive Ministers and other decision makers. At the start of the year, we developed a series of 'Policy Asks' for NI, which have a particular emphasis on rights and equality. These 'asks' are based on a recent mapping exercise by CAJ examining the status of rights-based commitments from the agreements of the NI peace process.

Chaired by UNISON, we hosted a seminar in January attended by the Shadow Secretary of State, Peter Kyle, which was centred on these policy asks. We also hosted a hustings event in the run up to the May 2022 Stormont election, during which our members were able to put questions directly to political representatives from Sinn Féin, the SDLP, Alliance, and the Green Party NI (the UUP, DUP and TUV were invited, but did not attend. People Before Profit had to cancel).

In September 2022, the Coalition held an in-person engagement session with a delegation of European and international lawyers who were undertaking a factfinding mission to Ireland on the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. The delegation included members of European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights. Following their visit to NI, the delegation plans to produce a report on the present state of the GFA, including recommendations.

Hate crime and misogyny: Hate expression remains prevalent in public space in NI, causing significant harm to the communities it targets. The intimidation it conveys is also a notable contributor to housing segregation. In May 2022, the Coalition organised a roundtable discussion on CAJ's new report, *Dealing with Hate Expression in Public Space in NI*. The report analyses public authorities' duties and practices towards removing hate expression from public space and makes policy recommendations.

The roundtable brought together representatives from public authorities, Coalition members, and academics for an open discussion on the report. The event was held with support from the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice at QUB

The Coalition has conducted a substantial amount of work in recent years on hate crime - including examining how misogyny can best be protected against under NI law. In January 2022, the Department of Justice launched the first of two consultations related to the recent review of hate crime legislation in NI (which the Coalition engaged extensively with up until its final report was published in late 2020). The consultation dealt with a number of issues including the approach to misogyny and sectarianism aggravators.



Following the launch of the consultation, the Coalition held a webinar to consider the new misogyny aggravator model provided by the Working Group on Misogyny and Criminal Justice in Scotland in their report, *Misogyny – A Human Rights Issue*. Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, who led the working group, was the keynote speaker and provided a detailed overview of her model for Coalition members and other guests. The Coalition is currently organising a follow-up event with Helena.

■ Conflict and dealing with the past

We support the CAJ position which has welcomed a decision by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers to call on the UK to rethink the controversial NI Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill.

The CoM states that the legislation must be in full compliance with the European Convention of Human Rights, enable effective investigations into all outstanding cases, and be able to gain the confidence of victims, families and potential witnesses. The CoM goes on to state its serious concerns at the lack of formal consultation on the current legacy bill and the minimal support for, and public confidence in the Bill and its mechanisms within NI from victims groups,

civil society, the NI Human Rights Commission and political representatives. It urged the UK Government to make significant amendments to the Bill, including guaranteeing in law the independence of the proposed Information Recovery Commission and ensuring that full disclosure of information be given to it. The UK was also urged to allow pending inquests to conclude and to reconsider the conditional immunity scheme, given concerns about its compatibility with the European Convention.

We support the CAJ call on the UK Government to withdraw this Bill and abide by its international human rights obligations.

Bill of Rights and Human Rights Consortium

UNISON is represented on the Human Rights Consortium Board by Thomas Mahaffy, Head of Organising & Development. The Consortium is a broad alliance of over 170 civil society organisations from across all communities, sectors and areas of NI. Additional background information on many of the issues raised in this report have been addressed in previous sections.



NI Protocol: The Consortium continues to convene its Brexit and Human Rights Working Group (BHRWG). Following member briefings in November and December, a 'Looking Beyond Brexit' webinar was held in April co-hosted with the Human Rights Partnership, Ad-Hoc Group on N/S & E/W relationships and the NI Civil Society Working Group on the Protocol. The Consortium subsequently submitted evidence on the implementation and experiences of the Protocol to a follow-up inquiry on its impact by the House of Lords Sub-Committee, and in July criticised the new NI Protocol Bill which outlined dramatic alterations to the Protocol while conferring powers to UK Government Ministers to amend or disapply most Articles at their discretion.

Bill of Rights: On 10th December 2021, the Consortium joined over 50 civil society organisations from across NI in writing to the First and Deputy First Minister to challenge the suspension of the NI Assembly Ad-Hoc committee on a Bill of Rights. The letter expressed grave concern at the blockage on progress at the Committee and called for action by the UK and Irish Government to end the political veto on human rights in NI and to intervene to progress a Bill of Rights.

The Consortium engaged extensively with local political parties to have the committee process reinitiated. This happened in January 2022 and the final report of the Committee was published in February 2022. Of the five contributing parties, only the DUP were opposed to the development of a Bill of

Rights containing new rights for individuals in NI. The Consortium believes that it is not acceptable that any party or any government place a veto on the protection and advancement of rights and continues to support the 'Make Our Future Fair campaign' which is dedicated towards the achievement of a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights for NI.

Human Rights Act: In December 2021, the UK Government launched a consultation on its plans to scrap the Human Rights Act and replace it with a Bill of Rights. In response the Consortium:

- hosted an initial online briefing seminar;
- submitted its consultation response and produced an accessible guide to support civil society in making responses;
- coordinated NI involvement in a UK wide webinar looking at the impact on devolution (Justice Minister Naomi Long MLA spoke at the event);
- coordinated local civil society discussion and engagement on the proposals in the Bill of Rights Bill introduced in June 2022;
- submitted evidence to the Joint Committee on Human Rights' legislative scrutiny of the Bill.



In September the so-called 'British Bill of Rights' was dropped from the Government's legislative agenda but we expect the new government to push forward with plans to repeal and replace the Human Rights Act. The Consortium is currently seeking to enhance the NI evidence base on the use of the HRA via case studies and the development of briefing and advocacy materials on the Human Rights Act.

Universal Periodic Review of the UK: The Consortium made a submission to this Review in March 2022 and highlighted its key

concerns on the existing human rights landscape in NI including the Human Rights Act, Bill of Rights, Brexit, and NIHRC Funding. The UPR is a peer review process whereby member states review and hold the UK to account for its progress in protecting human rights and it is expected that the UK will be formally reviewed under the UPR process later this year.

NI Human Rights Festival: The 2022 NI Human Rights Festival will take place from 3-10 December and will seek to engage new audiences in conversations about human rights at home and abroad. Events will include speakers and panels from the community voluntary sector; sessions featuring artists and writers engaged in human rights work; as well as more creative, interactive sessions.

Civil Society Alliance: In January 2022 the Consortium, alongside the Human Rights Consortium Scotland, and the Wales Civil

Society Forum on Brexit established the Civil Society Alliance with grant support from the Legal Education Fund. The overarching aim of the Alliance, which now has two London based staff in post who are managed by the Consortium, is to empower civil society organisations from across the UK to scrutinise and influence constitutional, administrative and legal changes to the UK policy landscape. The Alliance has recruited civil society members from across the UK and is quickly fulfilling its intended role of coordinating civil society voices on its core objectives.

The CSA has already agreed a memorandum of understanding with the European Economic and Social Committee. This Committee is the voice of organised civil society in the EU and has been the active civil society coordinator of responses to the UK Government's Retained EU Law Bill which will end retained EU law in the UK.

■ Participation and the Practice of Rights

UNISON NI continues to work in partnership with the Participation and Practice of Rights organisation founded by former Regional Secretary 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. PPR continues to work with UNISON branches as well as providing training as part of the UNISON regional education programme.

Take Back the City activists continue to work alongside a coalition of planning and housing experts to campaign for sustainable social housing on the former Mackie's site in West Belfast. The 25 acre site is the biggest piece of publicly owned land in the city in the area of highest housing need. Belfast City Council's plans for the site are for a Greenway and parkland, with no housing.

Following the Planning Committee's decision to vote through a Greenway in September 2021, a brave homeless family from West Belfast brought a Judicial Review against the

Council in December 2021. They were granted leave for the JR to be heard, after which the Council approached the High Court to voluntarily quash its own planning order in May 2022. However, within just weeks the Greenway plans were back on the Committee's agenda, and after three separate attempts to pass the decision, it was again approved by Sinn Féin, DUP, UUP and Alliance Councillors.



In the meantime, TBTC launched a major international urban planning competition which has had interest and entries from all over the world. The final designs will be showcased on the <https://takebackthecity.ie> website with opportunities for people to evaluate and feedback on the designs online and in person at a series of public events,

In August Take Back the City held a two day 'City of the Future' event close to the Mackie's site which was attended by 180 participants from the fields of permaculture, planning, housing, design, information technology and architecture, culminating in a family open day on the newly established garden site at MUMO.

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FOI investigations revealed that the number of asylum-seeking families housed in hotels in the north had increased from 14 in October to more than 1,000 in April 2022.

Simultaneously **#LiftTheBan** campaigners have invited local organisations and businesses to support a **#KindEconomy** initiative, through which individuals and families seeking asylum can benefit from goods and services in their communities. PPR expressed its gratitude to UNISON for participating in the Kind Economy with the offer of food hygiene certificate training to hotel residents.

The growth of Gairdín an Phobail has enabled us in partnership to support the Black Mountain Rewilding Project - establishing a tree nursery and a still pond to enhance and support biodiversity on the Belfast hills. GROW have also been instrumental in the development of a wildflower meadow at the Mackie's site and in revitalising another local community garden project adjacent to the

site - on one of Belfast worst impacted interfaces in partnership with a local multicultural group of families in the MUMO women's project.

PPR continue to support organisations in the South and in Scotland to develop and implement our approach to **human rights monitoring and participation**. This year we have engaged and supported the Travellers

of North Cork to disseminate rights based monitoring processes among their partner organisations and communities. We are currently supporting Rights Platform in South Dublin to undertake similar work in the Clondalkin and Tallaght areas of the city.

We continue to work alongside **Making Rights Real** – an organisation seeking to use a human rights-based approach with marginalised communities across Scotland.

■ Migrant Centre NI (MCNI)

Established in 2012, the aim of the Migrant Centre NI (MCNI) is to tackle racism and eliminate barriers against new and settled migrant communities in NI. MCNI is currently chaired by UNISON's Pamela Dooley and we are also represented on the Board by Local Organiser, Nathalie Donnelly.

The **Race Hate Crime Advocacy service** is a bilingual service which has been operating since 2013 in partnership with PSNI, Department of Justice, Victim Support, the Rainbow Project and Leonard Cheshire NI.

The Centre's bi-lingual support workers provide a one-stop shop model of service to victims of racist hate crime and incidents, whether they are settled ethnic minorities, migrant workers or asylum seekers and refugees. Interpreters are provided.



Areas of support include:

- providing a safe place to enable victims to share their experiences (listening through support) and encourage increased reporting to the police;
- undertaking risk assessments and exploration of options in order to respond to the needs of the victims and their families;



- drawing up action plans that are agreed with the victims;
- accompany victims to attend police interviews;
- liaising regularly with PSNI in providing follow-up support;
- making referrals to local and/or regional organisations if necessary..

Physical and online hate crime awareness sessions have continued throughout 2022 in addition to political briefings and training sessions at PSNI stations across NI.

Advice Services - Covid 19 Crisis Fund

Community Foundation NI: This funding has enabled the Migrant Centre to provide financial health and well-being support and advice through financial rights advice in relation to Covid support and access to benefits for Black and Minority Ethnic individuals approaching the Migrant Centre for advice. This includes:

- providing culturally competent and linguistically appropriate advice;
- working with new clients approaching the centre and clients referred for other types of support e.g. through our Hate Crime advocates;
- assisting those clients with benefits eligibility and maximisation reviews in order to ensure they and all their family

- members are able to access all financial support they are entitled to;
- assisting BME individuals impacted by loss of income as a result of Covid including those impacted by redundancy and many who are self-employed;
- supporting individuals with English as a second language or no English language skills who found it difficult navigating the support systems themselves;
- directing families to support outside of the benefit systems particularly where there was a lack of technology and broadband for homeschooling;
- supporting families to access the IT support Schemes offered by the ESA through schools and additional schemes, one of which was supported by PSNI;
- directing individuals and families to alternative better value services to reduce their outgoings and signposting clients to debt advice services when necessary.

The Centre continues to deliver the NI-wide **Financial Health and Well-Being project**. This 3 year Community Fund project has been in place since March 2021 and provides culturally sensitive, bilingual support to migrant and BME individuals facing severe financial hardship who need to reduce their debt; maximise their income; and/or access benefits or other services, related to their financial dependence.

EUSS Settlement Scheme Support Project:

The EU Settlement Scheme deadline has now passed but the Centre, in partnership with Advice NI, is still providing:

- direct help for vulnerable EU citizens through over the phone advice, advice drop in clinics and appointments; and
- information sessions for community groups, businesses, statutory bodies and other organisations.



Migrant Centre NI is registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner to Level 2 and Advice NI is registered at Level 3 and provides support for all complex cases.

Migration Justice Project: MCNI is funded through the Justice Together Initiative to undertake policy work, advocate and lobby for migrant rights and for a just immigration system. Its advocacy work is informed by the lived experiences of service users and it engages at the NI and UK levels. MCNI also engages in gender justice advocacy, lobbying, and policy in partnership with WRDA. It is represented on the Women's Policy Group NI and the National Women's Council's All-Island Women's Forum.

The Global Majority Fund: MCNI is an intermediary body for funds supported by Comic Relief co-financed by The National Emergencies Trust, The Clothworkers' Foundation, Barclays and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation



■ Women at work and in society

In addition to the extensive work undertaken by our own regional Women's Committee and the emerging branch networks, UNISON continues to play a key role in the wider **women's movement**.

We are members of, or support the work of, a wide range of women's organisations including the ICTU Women's Committee; the Women's Policy Group; the Women's Budget Group; the Women's Research and Development Agency; the NI European Women's Platform; Alliance for Choice; Reclaim the Agenda; and the Women's Support Network. The following are some of the critical initiatives we are highlighting in this year's report.



The **Women's Policy Group NI** is a platform for women working in policy and advocacy roles in different organisations to share their work and speak with a collective voice on key issues. It is made up of women from trade unions, grassroots women's organisations, women's networks, feminist campaigning organisations, LGBT+ organisations, support service providers, human rights and equality organisations and individuals.

Through our membership of the Women's Policy Group we have contributed to a number of government consultations including:

- Department of Health and Department of Justice Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy;
- Executive Office Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy;
- Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Bill;
- Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Bill;

We also presented evidence to the Committee for the Economy on a proposed Zero Hours Contract Bill as part of a wider delegation

made up of representatives from the women's sector and trade union movement.

As stakeholders of the Women's Policy Group we attended their Strategic Planning Day in June 2022 and helped shaped the direction and priorities for the Group going forward. The Women's Policy Group also organised and hosted the first ever Women's Parliament event in Stormont as part of International Women's Day. A number of UNISON activists participated at this event.

Regional Committee and our Women's Committee developed motions in support of the **Feminist Recovery Plan** which were submitted to both ICTU and UNISON conferences throughout 2021/22. As earlier reported, key recommendations in the plan are central to many of our demands in both the no going back to normal campaign and our challenge to the cost of living crisis.

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**. This was one of our core demands in our UNISON manifesto for the May 2022 NI Assembly elections and will feature again in our forthcoming manifesto for yet another Assembly election.

Through ICTU and in partnership with the TUC we continue to press the UK Government to ratify **ILO C190 against violence and harassment in the in the world of work**. The NI Executive has already confirmed to the UK Government its agreement to ratification, following extensive lobbying.



We supported the global **International day for elimination of violence against women** on 25 November 2021 with a range of actions through UNISON and ICTU.

Solidarity

■ UNISON Solidarity Group

The members of our UNISON NI Solidarity Group continue to be deeply involved in a wide variety of initiatives. We continue to host a range of UNISON activity through social media platforms, including seminars and film nights. We also continue to be involved in other global solidarity work through our Group, our self-organised groups and branches including:

- continuing support from our Women's Committee on the position of women in Palestine, Turkey and Afghanistan in particular;
- continued involvement in campaigns to support refugees and asylum seekers;
- continued support with humanitarian aid in zones hit by conflict or natural disasters;
- continued work on climate change and a sustainable environment; and
- participation in the Clean Clothes Campaign and Labour Behind the Label.

ICTU Global Solidarity: A large UNISON delegation attended the Global Solidarity Summer School in Sligo in September. The programme sessions covered climate justice; trade unions for peace; protecting workers rights and holding corporations accountable in the post-Covid world. Workshops also discussed Justice for Colombia; Hong Kong

labour rights; Coalition 2030 (Sustainable development goals); The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement (in support of the Palestinian people); the far right; and the Freedom for Ocalan campaign (relating to imprisoned Kurdish political prisoner Abdullah Öcalan).



Both the Regional Secretary and the President of ICTU paid tribute to our activist and Secretary of TUFPP Eamon McMahon who died as the summer school was convening. Eamon was a member of both the UNISON North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Branch and NIPSA. He founded Trade Union Friends of Palestine 16 years ago after first bringing the idea to the NI Committee of ICTU in 2006. Patricia McKeown described him as 'a fierce and tireless champion for the rights of the Palestinian People' and also spoke at his funeral a few days later.

■ Palestine

The Solidarity Group and many of our branches have continued to prioritise support for the Palestinian people. Our organisers, Caitlin Ni Chathail and Susan Neill, and senior secretary Liz Robinson, have been supporting Eamonn McMahon's extensive work schedule over the past year. Our group is determined that the programme of work which includes the Ambassadors visits, our work with TUFPP and other solidarity organisations, and our role on the European trade union network will continue.

Three of our group members, Conor McCarthy, Margaret McKee and Kevin Hillick, are scheduled to visit the Aida camp in the

Westbank in early November. The following branches have provided Ambassadors who have all been part of the TUFPP Ambassador delegations - Belfast Education, Down Education, Newry & Mourne, NI Ambulance, Orchard, RVH & Muckamore and South & East Belfast Health. Arrangements are already in place for the next Ambassadors visit.

All branches are encouraged to affiliate to TUFPP as our main vehicle for delivering solidarity actions in support the Palestinian people.

Throughout the year, UNISON members and staff have participated in a wide range of

webinars and campaign meetings in support of Palestinian rights. Solidarity actions also included sending support to Gaza to help cope with the pandemic.

In August, our solidarity group hosted Omar Barghouti, co-founder of the BDS movement. Sessions were held in Galway House and also with some of our Ambassadors.



The war on Gaza: Throughout the year, TUPF has continually alerted ICTU to the escalating Israeli attacks on Gaza and called for intervention by the Irish Government.

Regional Committee agreed to continue supporting an important project on providing therapeutic learning to young people through education services in three marginalised communities in the Gaza Strip. Other unions have now come on board and we will jointly support the project for a 3 year period. The project is run through the Centre for Global Education.

In July 2022, the RVH and Muckamore branch hosted the annual Gaza hill walk and in August we participated at a Gaza solidarity rally with keynote speaker Omar Barghouti at rally at Belfast City Hall.

Apartheid Israel: In February 2022, Amnesty International launched a major report stating

that massive seizures of Palestinian land and property, unlawful killings, forcible transfer, drastic movement restrictions, and the denial of nationality and citizenship to Palestinians are all components of a system which amounts to apartheid under international law.

It further stated that this system is maintained by violations which Amnesty International found to constitute apartheid as a crime against humanity, as defined in the Rome Statute and Apartheid Convention. This report also reinforced the findings of apartheid by the Israeli Human Rights organisation B'Tselem.

On the foot of this report, an NI branch submitted a motion to NDC which unfortunately did not get debated before close of conference and is remitted to the NEC. The motion was supported by Regional Committee and the NI delegation.

In 2022 UNISON produced the new Guide for UNISON activists, 'Talking about Palestinian Rights'. This has been commended by ICTU and a number of affiliates sought copies for their own unions.

Trade Union Friends of Palestine: We continue to support TUPF with resources. The Regional Secretary is the Chair and efforts will now be made to replace Eamon as Secretary. UNISON branches and staff attend the main TUPF meetings and Susan Neill (AO) and Caitlin Ni Chathail (RO) are key members of the TUPF steering group.

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS): The ICTU Executive Council working group has now signed off the new action plan aimed at promoting action on BDS across all affiliated unions.

■ Colombia

Regional Committee continues to encourage branch affiliation to Justice for Colombia (JFC) to ensure that its work can continue to keep an international spotlight on the killings and to push for real action on the Peace Agreement.

The assassination of trade unionists and human rights activists continues at a frightening rate and threatens the Peace

Process. By September over 1,300 trade unionists and social activists and 340 former FARC guerrillas have been killed since the 2016 peace agreement was signed.



All three NI NEC members (Margaret McKee, Ali Long and Catherine McKenna) have now been part of JfC delegations to Colombia and each has returned to promote support for the JfC campaign. The most recent Peace Monitor delegate was Catherine McKenna who was in Colombia during the historic election of the left-wing candidate Gustavo Petro as the new President. While this signals hope for the future, it becomes a more dangerous time for supporters of the Peace Process as the previous President had the support of its opponents.

The Regional Secretary is a board member of JfC, representing ICTU with the Foras General Secretary, Kevin Callanin, current ICTU President. During the year there have been several meetings with the Irish Ambassador to Colombia and Irish Government officials calling for intervention on the killings and human rights abuses.

In September 2022 UNISON hosted Colombian senator Victoria Sandino (pictured below) at a Global Solidarity event in Galway House. Our delegation to the ICTU Global Solidarity Summer School then joined her at the Sligo event and had the opportunity for more detailed dialogue.



■ Cuba

Branches are encouraged to affiliate to the Cuba Solidarity campaign and support its actions. At the 2021 ICTU Biennial conference we supported motions:

- calling for the immediate ending of the illegal blockade of Cuba, which has for the 29th time been condemned by the UN General Assembly;
- calling on the Irish Government to use its position on the UN Security Council to help end the illegal blockade.

The US blockade of Cuba entered its sixtieth year in 2022. It is the longest economic warfare against a people in history and causes shortages and suffering on a daily basis. During the COVID pandemic, lives were lost as the blockade prevented delivery of

emergency medical supplies and delayed Cuba's vaccine programme. A number of our activists assisted by sending much needed supplies to help cope with Covid.

Most recently Cuba has again been dramatically hit by hurricane Ian. This is not featured on domestic or international news. Branches are encouraged to donate to the relief fund currently being promoted by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign.



■ Solidarity work with others

We are affiliated to a wide range of solidarity campaigns including in Central and South America, Turkey and Afghanistan. We are also resuming our joint work with other UNISON regions and hope to participate in

the restored annual seminar with Scotland, North West and Northern regions in the near future.

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.

Patricia McKeown and Anne Speed were both re-elected to the **Executive Council** for a 2 year term ending in 2023. The **Biennial Conference** originally scheduled for July 2021, took place in Belfast in October 2021. UNISON motions on 'Dealing with the Legacy of the Past' and 'No Going Back – Trade Unions Demand for a Rights Based Society' were passed unanimously.

The delayed **NIC ICTU Conference** is scheduled to take place in Enniskillen at the end of November 2022. John Patrick Clayton and Patricia McKeown have been renominated to the **NI Committee**, and James Large has been nominated for the Conference Arrangements Committee. Regional Committee has submitted 3 motions on the Cost of living crisis, Fighting for health and social care services, and the Climate emergency and just transition.



Both the NI Committee and the Executive Council now have hybrid meetings, although NIC ICTU has taken a decision to resume monthly committee meetings online due to the rise in Covid cases. The UNISON team represents Congress on a range of groups. We are supporting a variety of ICTU campaigns including those on the cost of living crisis; 'No return to normal'; and Just Transition in response to the climate emergency. Table 14 sets out UNISON involvement in the Congress.

Regional Committee continues to encourage UNISON activists to become involved in local **Trades Councils**.



Throughout the year, members and activists participated in **ICTU virtual events, seminars and training programmes** on a wide range of trade union priorities. In June, we took part in the ICTU march on Stormont on the costs of living crisis and our members are encouraged to participate in the range of ICTU town hall meetings on a programme launched in October 2022. Full UNISON delegations participated in 2021 Biennial Conference in Belfast, the Global Solidarity Summer School in Sligo in September 2022, and the ICTU Biennial Women's Conference in October 2022.

The first physical **May Day** rally in nearly 3 years took place in Belfast on 30 April 2022. Hundreds of UNISON members joined the event to celebrate the essential workers who kept our economy running during the pandemic, often at huge personal sacrifice.



In August 2022, the Regional Committee, staff and the members of UNISON NI expressed our deep regret at the death of Harry 'Trixie' Hamilton, former General Secretary of the NI Musicians' Association and husband of our Regional Secretary, Patricia McKeown. We thank Harry for his dedication to the rights of musicians and workers everywhere, and for the comradeship, music and laughter he shared with our members, and all those privileged to have known him. He performed at May Day, Regional Council and union events over many years. He is very sadly missed.

Table 14 - UNISON representation on ICTU structures

ICTU Structure and purpose	UNISON representation
ICTU Executive ¹	Patricia McKeown; Anne Speed
NI Committee, ICTU ²	Patricia McKeown; John Patrick Clayton
ICTU Equality & Human Rights Group ³	Patricia McKeown; John Patrick Clayton
ICTU Conference Arrangement Committee	James Large (nominated)
ICTU Women's Committee ⁴	Danielle McCusker (Vice Chair); Deborah Yapicioz
ICTU Health Services Committee ⁵	Anne Speed (Chair); Patricia McKeown; Joe McCusker; Maura McKenna
ICTU Education TU Group ⁶	Anne Speed (Chair); Heather McKinstry
ICTU Public Services Group	RMT, senior lay reps and regional organisers
ICTU Disability Committee ⁷	Amanda Sweetlove; Marjorie Trimble;
ICTU Black and Minority Ethnic Committee	Patrick Yu
ICTU LGBT Committee ⁷	Alexis Dickson
ICTU Retired Members	Angela Boorman, Archie Thomson
ICTU Youth Forum ⁷	Emer Kelly; Hannah Lyttle
ICTU Education Officers Group ⁸	Caitlin Ni Chathail
ICTU Health & Safety Committee ⁷	Emma Jane Cullen; Ray Rafferty
ICTU Solidarity Committee NI	Mary Ferris; Kevin Hillick; Conor McCarthy; Eamon McMahon (TUFPP)*; Patricia McKeown (ex officio)
ICTU Education alliance ⁹	Anne Speed and nominated reps

**Eamon died in September 2022 and particular tribute was paid to him by the Regional Secretary at the Global Solidarity Summer School.*

1 Main policy making body – all island

2 Main policy making body for NI

3 NICICTU 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.



OBJECTIVE 4: REGIONAL RESOURCES & MANAGEMENT



Finance & managing resources

■ Summary Accounts – Lay Activity Fund

The audited regional accounts for the year ending 31 December 2021 will be distributed at Regional Council.

The UNISON NI lay activity budget for 2021 was £104,112.00. The allocation for 2022 is £108,148.96 representing a 3.7% increase 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 made a number of donations in line with UNISON policy. Where appropriate, branches are invited to support the relevant project or cause.

A total of £5,150 was donated to projects through the following organisations:

- Durham Miners' Gala and Museum
- Reclaim the Agenda
- Dream Dearg
- Daniel O'Neill funeral
- Oxford Mutual
- Belfast City of Sanctuary
- People's Kitchen
- WRDA
- Kevin Hillick Hardship Fund
- North West Migrants Forum
- Occupational Therapists Anniversary Dinner

Regional Committee also affiliated to the following organisations:

- Trade Union Friends of Palestine
- Justice for Colombia
- Reclaim the Enlightenment

- Nicaragua Solidarity
- National Pensioners' Convention
- Cuba Solidarity
- Linen Hall Library
- CAJ
- Centre for Global Education
- Law Centre
- Irish Labour History Society
- HPPS staff side

The total paid in affiliations so far this year is £2575.



■ Branch finance

Once again there were issues with branches 2021 AFR submissions, but these were all addressed before the deadline and all branches submitted on time.

Full support was available to all branches, many of which took up the offer of assistance.

Two branches were audited in November and December 2021. No further audits were done in 2022. It is anticipated that the normal schedule of audits will resume in 2023 with a target of every branch having an audit at 3 year intervals.

■ Income and RMS

A major priority has been to monitor employers to ensure that their payroll systems continue to collect unions subs and that membership applications are processed. These are centralised functions in NI. The RMS team has successfully recovered subscription income from a number of small employers. In addition to normal data cleansing, a major exercise is underway to prepare for the Local

Government Pay Ballot. This will be followed by a similar exercise in anticipation of the Health Service Pay Ballot.

Total income returned to Head Office increased to £5,147,265.11 This represents a 4.6% increase on the previous year (£4,919,812.72). Total income returned to branches for 2021 was £1,216,089.56.

■ Premises

Galway House reopened in June 2022 with health & safety guidance in place for all staff and visitors. Since then we have hosted a number of courses, meetings and events. Regional Committee has agreed to keep all Covid health & safety arrangements in place in the light of rising cases. The redevelopment work on Galway House, delayed due to the pandemic, is now commencing.

North West Support Centre: As a result of structural issues in the Old Church, we are actively seeking alternative premises and have registered an interest in a site at Ebrington for our North West Support Centre.

Currently, the premises are still in the planning stage but we have secured a rolling lease which allows us to stay in situ at the Old Church, without penalty, until we find an alternative.



UNISON Centre,
Galway House



NW Support Centre,
The Old Church

■ Environmental sustainability

We continue to implement UNISON's environmental sustainability policy in the management of our premises and throughout our administrative systems. Our data base of email addresses has increased to 74% of our membership and is now the first choice means of communication. This

has significantly reduced our surface mail distribution and, as a result, contributes to a reduction in our carbon footprint. We remain committed to ensuring that sustainable environmental features are implemented when the re-fit of Galway House begins.

■ Administrative systems and front-line communication

IT equipment & systems: NI has been chosen as the pilot region for a new nationwide IT programme. MERLIN is replacing RMS, WARMS & MCT, however different users will have different levels of access. Full access to RMS will be available to RMS staff for a short period of time after the launch of MERLIN.

UNISON NI Website: Throughout 2021/22 the website has been regularly updated with various new information. For example:

- the rolling homepage banner has been updated with new graphics linking to new pages, including the NJC pay consultation, the HSC pay information, AGM and welfare grant information;
- a new Green UNISON page has been added detailing the new Green UNISON campaign calling on employers across the public sector to decarbonise public services;

- during the NI Assembly elections, another new page was added linking to the online UNISON manifesto which was created as an interactive flipbook;
- all AGM information was again posted online with a new link for members to register for the online Zoom meetings for each branch;
- the AFC and NJC pay rates for 2021/22 were added; and
- we continue to regularly update the news page with new press releases.

Due to GDPR regulations, the branch page contact details have been removed and a link to the national branch finder has been added. All branch committee lists have also been removed. Work is ongoing to reorganise the information on each branch page.



As at 12 September 2022, we have 13,739 followers on our Facebook page. This is 731 more followers than the 13,008 we had in October last year.

We have posted regularly on our Facebook page with updates on, for example:

- HSC, NJC and AFC pay;
- St Marys ballot;
- Branch AGMs;
- UNISON College NI, welfare and financial services;
- press statements sent out from the regional office to the media;
- various events and rallies including International Women's Day, May Day and Pride activities.

We have also shared photos of branch activities for Stars in Our Schools; NHS Day of Action; Pay Up Now demos; Put Pay Right campaign activities; cost of living activities; recruitment stalls; and the NI Assembly Elections hustings event.

We continue to have good engagement on our page with followers sharing, liking and commenting on posts.

Over the period from 1 Jan – Sept 2022 our Facebook post reach was 588,603. We had 6,156 individual likes on posts, 4,550 clicks on links to further information, 1,082 comments on posts and 1,892 shares of posts on to other pages. We remain the most followed Facebook page for unions in NI with almost double the following of all other union pages.



We have 3,731 followers on Twitter @UNISONNI, up from 3,583 since last reporting - a rise of 148 new followers.

From Nov 2021 – Sept 2022 we have sent 73 tweets, made 60,966 Impressions on user pages, had 18,457 visits to our Twitter page and 838 mentions by other pages and users. We are frequently tagged by other organisations and users. We mostly use our Twitter page to share press releases to be picked up by media and engage in wider UNISON campaigns through hashtags.

Over the past year we have tweeted about all the issues shared on Facebook and detailed in the column opposite.

Online Platforms: Our new online platforms for members and the public to email their MLAs are proving successful. They have been used in the run up to the May 2022 Assembly elections, extensively in the Free School Meals Campaign, and in the NJC pay consultation. They will also be used as part of our strategy on the health service pay campaign.

Email communication with branches and members: Our database of up-to-date email addresses and phone numbers for members continues to grow. This has proven even more beneficial during the current period with a substantial increase in the information sent out to our members by text and email. An increased number of branches are using Warms for direct contact with members.

Staffing

Regional Committee records its thanks to the staff team for all their work throughout 2021/2022.

Deirdre Graham retired at the end of 2021 and Roslyn McCartney was appointed as

our new RMS Supervisor. Alison Meshida was appointed to replace Roslyn as RMS Clerk and we welcomed Grainne Campbell as a new Receptionist.

Our current staff team is:

Regional Management Team

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

Administration

- Michele Bradford – Regional Administrator
- Tracey Bryson - Secretary (pt)
- Caroline Butler - Building Maintenance and Catering
- Anne Campbell - Team Support
- Gemma Curran - Receptionist (pt)
- Grainne Campbell - Receptionist (pt)
- Alison Meshida - RMS Clerk
- Deirdre Graham - (retired as RMS Supervisor in December 2021)
- Shelley King - Secretary (pt)
- Roslyn McCartney - RMS Supervisor
- Norma Neal - Secretary (pt)
- Brenda Peel - RMS Clerk
- Liz Robinson - Senior Secretary

Specialist Staff

- John Patrick Clayton - Policy Officer
- Sharrona Clinton – Communications & Digital Engagement Officer
- Rebekah Corbett – Local Organiser (Research & Development) (pt)
- Caoímhe McNeill – Policy & Bargaining Support Organiser

Organising

- Claire Bolt – Area Organiser
- Marianne Buick – Area Organiser
- Nuala Conlon - Regional Organiser
- Nathalie Donnelly - Local Organiser (pt)
- Danielle McCusker - Area Organiser
- Joe McCusker - Regional Organiser
- Susan Neill - Area Organiser
- Caitlín Ní Chathail - Regional Organiser (Education)
- Louise O'Hara - Regional Organiser





UNION BUILDING

EQUALITY

PARTNERSHIP

PEACE

PARTICIPATION