



ANNUAL REPORT



Who's Who on the Regional Committee in 2018/2019

The following is a list of Regional Committee members and a record of attendance during 2019.

Joint Regional Convenors

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

Committee Members

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

NEC Members in Attendance

Margaret McKee	Catering Assistant, Royal Hospitals, Belfast	0
Lucia McKeever	Community Ambassador, Meningitis Trust	1*
Alastair Long	Ambulance Personnel, Larne Ambulance Depot	4
Gillian Foley	Community Worker, Intensive Community Care, SEHSCT	0*

**Paul Allen (long term sickness); Fiona Barton retired January 2019; Janette Cochrane elected May 2019; Gillian Foley elected to NEC June 2019; Ashley Green resigned from committee February 2019; Lucia McKeever, NEC retired June 2019; Catherine McKenna elected April 2019; Roisin McKinley elected February 2019; Kenny McManus resigned from committee February 2019; Geraldine Thompson stood down September 2019 (no longer eligible as Youth Group rep)*

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Introduction

With almost 3 years without a Government and exit from the EU looming, the future presents enormous challenges for our members, their families and communities.

Jobs and public services have already suffered as a consequence of political instability. Our members' rights are under threat from many directions. As a union we have risen to the challenge. For the past three years the UNISON team has campaigned tirelessly. We have engaged with all political parties, the British and Irish Governments, and EU and US political representatives demanding protection for our members, public services and the Peace Process itself.

However the democratic deficit has already taken its toll. Budgets for health, education, housing and the benefits system are in trouble. Jobs are being lost in some sectors while vacancies grow in others, most notably health. As we approach the 2019 Regional Council our members in health and social services are preparing for a strike ballot in their campaign for pay justice.

Key policy and operational decisions are increasingly being taken by civil servants without engagement with the trade union movement and civil society in general. This has made our task as a union, seeking protection for our members' rights, all the more difficult and labour intensive. We continue to lead the field on interventions at all levels with employers, public services and Government Departments, in addition to our challenge function with the political system.

None of this work would be possible without a dedicated UNISON staff team and elected representatives supporting each other. Everyone has been under intense pressure throughout the year. New stewards and branch officials have joined the struggle. Others have retired or stepped down because of the increasing pressure of caring responsibilities. Some others are sadly no longer with us and will be remembered at Regional Council.

Growing an even stronger team is a core ambition of Regional Committee. We anticipate improved resources for our branches as a result of the Resolutions carried at NDC, and on instruction from the 2018 Regional Council we have submitted the business case for increased staffing resources.



May Day, 2019

Our Annual Report tracks developments, achievements and challenges in the work of Regional Committee, lay structures and our branches - all working in partnership with our staff team. As our membership continues to grow to record levels, it confirms that we are doing the right thing. The positive results of our membership survey reinforce it.

From the day to day workplace representation of our members, to protest action outside the Treasury in London and participation in marches and protests – for women's rights, for climate justice, in solidarity with the wider movement at the Durham Miners' Gala, and for human rights for Palestinians - UNISON NI members have been at the forefront.

The achievements and challenges in union organising, democratic participation, collective bargaining, campaigning, and in our public policy agenda outlined in this Report, together with motions from our branches and self organised groups, form our strategic programme of action for the coming year.

Regional Committee takes this opportunity to pay tribute to the hard work and dedication of our members, activists and staff throughout 2019, and we look forward to working together to advance our union agenda in the year to come.

Patricia McKeown
Regional Secretary

Denis Keatings
Joint Regional Convener

Gabrielle Carton
Joint Regional Convener

UNISON Objectives and Plan

NI Regional Council

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

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

Throughout the year the decisions of the Regional Council are actioned by the Regional Committee, UNISON staff and branches. This report to NI Regional Council is a record of the work of the Regional Committee and all lay structures since the last annual meeting of the Council in October 2018.



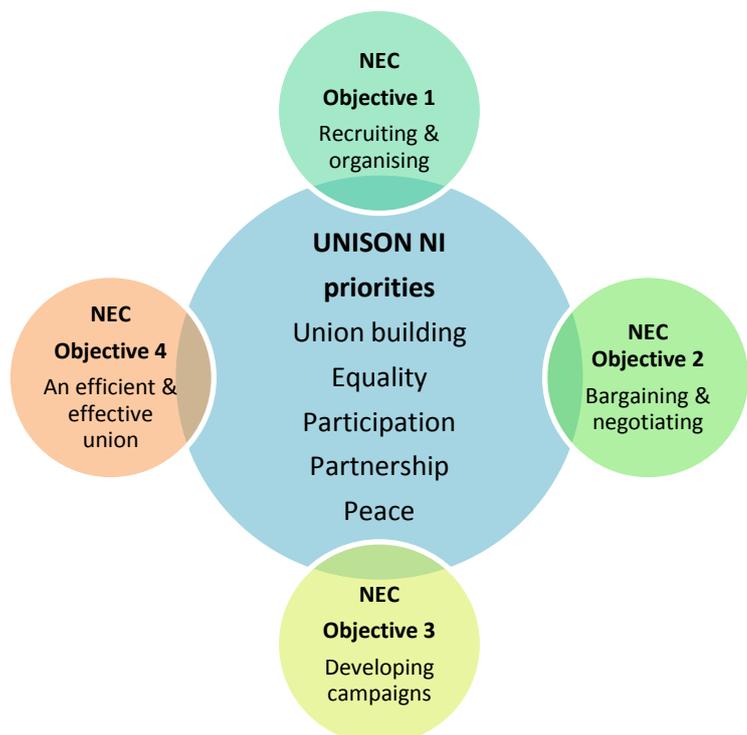
The Regional Committee takes this opportunity to thank all UNISON members, activists and staff for their role in making the past year such a success.

The UNISON NI Plan 2019

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

The NEC objectives remain fairly constant but the priorities are revised each year. Our core priorities are protecting our public services and our members' jobs, and growing the union.

For UNISON NI this means engaging with our members; strong bargaining with the employers; political campaigning, with equality and human rights at its core; and building the union through a strong organising programme.





Recruiting, organising,
representing &
retaining members

Recruiting and organising

Our recruitment and retention achievements in 2018/19

This section reports on the progress of the Regional Committee Organising & Recruitment Strategy and our record

recruitment achievements to the end of 2018 and during 2019 to date. Some of these achievements are summarised below.

Organising & Recruitment Strategy



Normal target
= 5000 new members
Enhanced target (due to
Fighting Fund)
= 6000 new members



Effective management
and co-ordination of the
Fighting Fund Initiative



Special initiatives across
key sectors, including
private homecare, migrant
workers & nursing homes



Prioritisation of infill
recruitment in health and
education



Development of detailed
recruitment and
organising plans linked
to branch and regional
campaigns



Support for UNISON-wide
recruitment initiatives
such as 'Grovember' &
'Go for Growth'

Our key achievements



Record recruitment achieved

- 7004 recruited during 2018 - 40% above normal (5000) target
- 4977 already recruited to date during 2019 - 33% above year-to-date target



UNISON NI is in a period of sustained membership growth. This is reflected across branches, sectors and targeted occupational groups



We continue to exceed our Fighting Fund Initiative recruitment targets

- 2018 = 3337 new members & 21% above target
- 2019 = 28% above year-to-date target



We are maintaining high levels of direct recruitment by stewards



We are one of the largest organisations of women on the island, with over 34,000 (83%) women members



We are the largest organisation of black and migrant workers in NI



Our membership is getting younger as the number of workers under 26 years old who join us grows each year

Our recruitment success, and our sustained growth over the past number of years, has only been possible due to the commitment and tireless activity of activists and staff across our organising, negotiating, and campaigning agenda at workplace, branch and regional level. This is particularly noteworthy given that it continues to take place at a time of ongoing political instability, budget cuts and austerity in both the public and private sectors.

However, Regional Committee is clear that this success will only be sustainable if all branches increase their stewards base. This core group must be properly elected, trained, mentored, supported and become active across key branch functions – particularly, recruiting, representing and supporting members. Membership sustainability also requires the increased democratic participation of the membership and encouraging their involvement around the workplace issues important to them and their colleagues. This forms a core part of our Review of Democratic Participation.

Specific activities that have again secured membership increase in 2019 include:

- playing our part in the UNISON-wide recruitment campaigns;
- challenging privatisation and reorganisation in health and education – particularly in the absence of a functioning Government;
- pay campaigns in health and education - including forthcoming industrial action in health and our demand for a real living wage across all sectors;
- challenging cuts to government funding to the community & voluntary sector;
- bargaining for recognition agreements - particularly in the private homecare and private nursing home sectors;
- our continuing campaign across the public service for the implementation of Section 75 of the NI Act 1998;
- challenging unsafe staffing levels and the roll-back on workers' rights;
- our campaigns on the impact of Brexit and the absence of Government;

- education and health sector specific campaigns as set out in Section 2 on Bargaining - particularly those that affect women's work, children's rights and patients' rights. These campaigns have encouraged more workers to join UNISON and have expanded our role on community activism.

RMS – Our RMS team play a vital role in our organising and recruitment plan. It continues to maintain centralised processing and databases in partnership with all branches, and plays a key role in mapping for joint branch assessments. The team has completed an excellent job on our health and social services membership in preparation for ballot.

UNISON-wide recruitment campaigns – Branches and the full staff team have fully supported UNISON-wide recruitment initiatives during the period. These included the Grovember campaign in November 2018 and the 'Go for Growth' campaign in May 2019.



■ Our recruitment achievements in 2018

2018 was the most successful year ever for UNISON NI in terms of overall recruitment and growth.



Table 1 and Fig 1 shows that during 2018:

- we recruited 7004 new members - our highest ever yearly recruitment figure;
- we exceeded our normal (5000) recruitment target by 40% and our enhanced (6000) target by 17%;
- we recruited 15% more new members than in 2017 – the previous record year;
- we increased our overall membership by a record 1908, and ended the year in growth by 4.5%;
- 21 branches met their yearly target;
- the Fighting Fund initiative recruited 3337 new members – 21% above target

Table 1– UNISON NI recruitment by branch, 1 Jan 2018 to 31 Dec 2018

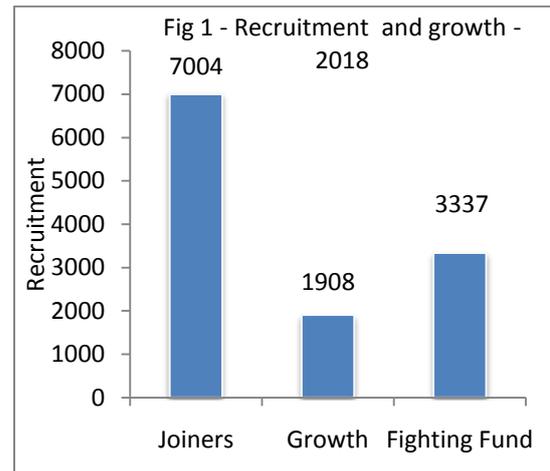
Branch	2018 Recruitment					2017
	Target	Total	Jan to Sept	Oct to Dec	% target met	Total
Belfast Education**	150	377	265	112	251%	280
Orchard ***	160	384	261	123	240%	328
Craigavon health**	140	321	260	61	229%	317
NEELB**	150	343	265	78	229%	300
Sperrin Devenish**	80	174	142	32	218%	185
Derry Education**	150	314	232	82	209%	177
Community & Voluntary**	200	365	287	78	183%	395
UCHT***	300	527	437	90	176%	502
N&W Belfast Health***	162	280	214	66	173%	333
Mater Hospital Trust**	100	158	117	41	158%	112
Foyle*	300	433	345	88	144%	291
South & East Belfast*	200	280	231	49	140%	253
Southern Education**	100	140	113	27	140%	119
Northern Health***	600	820	638	182	137%	700
Causeway*	170	222	170	52	131%	176
Health Agencies**	50	64	52	12	128%	15
Down Lisburn*	300	354	272	82	118%	328
Newry & Mourne***	200	229	176	53	115%	220
Down Education**	150	164	124	40	109%	160
Greenpark**	110	117	77	40	106%	76
Muckamore Abbey**	50	52	46	6	104%	55
Omagh & Fermanagh*	240	224	177	47	93%	188
Royal Hospitals**	413	367	263	104	89%	407
UU Jordanstown**	50	34	20	14	68%	19
Belfast City Hospital**	313	201	135	66	64%	109
UU Coleraine Magee **	40	23	14	9	58%	18
NI Blood Transfusion**	12	5	3	2	42%	6
NI Ambulance	85	29	21	8	34%	28
Rathgael**	15	3	1	2	20%	3
Total	5000	7004	5358	1646	140%	6100
		1908				1017

*Fighting Fund homecare project | **Fighting Fund initiative | ***Fighting Fund initiative & homecare project

Fighting Fund initiative: Figure 1 shows that the 2018 Fighting Fund initiative was again a huge success with 11 local organisers recruiting 3337 new members – 21% above the initiative target of 2750 and 48% of total UNISON NI recruitment over the year. It is clear from Table 1 that branches participating in the initiative continue to have had a significant increase in their membership.

It is also positive, in terms of recruitment sustainability, that direct activist recruitment has been maintained at relatively high levels with an additional 3667 new members recruited over and above the Fighting Fund total.

This demonstrates what can be achieved with co-ordinated effort between the branch and staff teams.



Our recruitment achievements in 2019 to date

Overall recruitment achievements during 2019

Table 2 details:

1. current branch recruitment targets and revised branch recruitment targets;
2. recruitment activity from January to end September 2019 – including the impact of the Fighting Fund; and
3. growth trends to date in 2019 and over the previous 5 year period.

All the signs are that by the end of 2019 we will again exceed our enhanced 6000 recruitment target and will record substantial membership growth across the vast majority of branches.

Recruitment: During 2019:

- 4977 new members have been recruited.
- current recruitment is 33% ahead of what we would expect to have achieved at this stage of the year to meet our normal (5000) target. It is also 11% ahead with respect to meeting our enhanced (6000) target;
- 11 branches have already met their yearly target in only 9 months;
- the Fighting Fund initiative has again been a huge success with 2172 new members recruited to date – 28% ahead of the year-to-date target and 44% of total UNISON NI recruitment.

Growth in full membership: Since January 2019:

- UNISON NI has grown by 1337 members – a growth rate of more than 3%.
- growth has taken place across 25 of our 28 branches.

Looking at our growth over a 5 year period, Table 2 (and Figures 2-6, later in this section) show that since 2014:

- we have grown as a region by 14%;
- a total of 21 branches have grown;
- all 5 education branches have grown significantly, ranging from 16% to 38%;
- 12 health branches now show sustained growth ranging from less than 1% to as much as 21%;
- in the community and voluntary sector, despite major funding problems, our membership has grown by 11%;
- branches with limited access to the Fighting Fund initiative are those that have achieved more limited growth.



Branch targets: At last year's Regional Council, it was agreed that we should revisit individual branch targets to properly reflect leavers and to ensure growth. Using a formula that takes into account (i) average

leavers figures over a 5 year period, and (ii) current full branch membership, Column 3 on Table 2 proposes new 2020 targets for discussion with each branch.

Table 2 – UNISON NI recruitment by branch, 1 Jan to 30 Sept 2019

Branch	1. Recruitment targets		2. Recruitment to date Jan-Sept 2019			3. Growth trends	
	Current	Proposed for 2020	Total	Fighting Fund	No. required to reach 2019 Target	Jan-Sept 2019 (no.)	2014-2019 (%)
Northern Health***	600	635	561	(290)	39	↑58	↑7%
RVH & Muckamore**	463	345	347	(160)	66	↑94	↑15%
Foyle*	300	290	345	(171)	Target Met	↑114	↑1%
UCHT***	300	275	320	(174)	Target Met	↑85	↑21%
Community & Voluntary**	200	305	302	(67)	Target Met	↑96	↑11%
Down Lisburn***	300	280	290	(116)	10	↑92	↑5%
Orchard H&SC***	160	310	286	(113)	Target Met	↑69	↑10%
Belfast Education**	150	230	242	(81)	Target Met	↑61	↑16%
N & W Belfast***	162	220	241	(119)	Target Met	↑53	↑14%
Craigavon Health**	140	230	200	(31)	Target Met	↑9	↑11%
NEELB**	150	180	199	(102)	Target Met	↑84	↑29%
Omagh & Fermanagh*	240	190	193	(71)	47	↑52	↓-4%
South & East Belfast*	200	250	190	(76)	10	↓-29	↓-1%
Causeway***	170	235	164	(102)	6	↑11	↓-2%
Derry Education**	150	130	157	(123)	Target Met	↑123	↑32%
Newry & Mourne***	200	200	155	(67)	45	↑26	↑3%
Sperrin Devenish**	80	80	141	(95)	Target Met	↑123	↑38%
Down Education**	150	140	140	(16)	10	↑95	↑17%
Belfast City Hospital**	313	170	138	(67)	175	↑20	↑0%
Southern Education**	100	100	100	(20)	Target Met	↑48	↑10%
Mater**	100	95	66	(45)	34	↓-1	↑3%
NI Ambulance	85	65	60	(4)	25	↑34	↓-6%
Greenpark**	110	85	58	(36)	52	↑2	↑12%
Health Agencies**	50	70	39	(13)	11	↑18	↓-9%
UU Jordanstown**	50	25	19	(3)	31	↓-7	↑52%
UU Coleraine**	40	20	14	(5)	26	↑3	↑1%
NI Blood Transfusion**	12	10	8	(4)	4	↑1	↓-6%
Rathgael**	15	10	2	(1)	14	↑1	↓-93%
	5000	5175	4977	(2172)	13	1337	↑14%

*Fighting Fund homecare project | **Fighting Fund initiative | ***Fighting Fund initiative & homecare project



Fig 2: 0-500 members

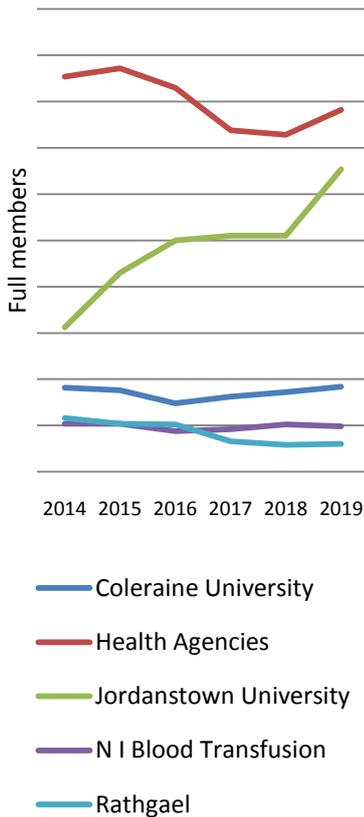


Fig 3: 500-1200 members

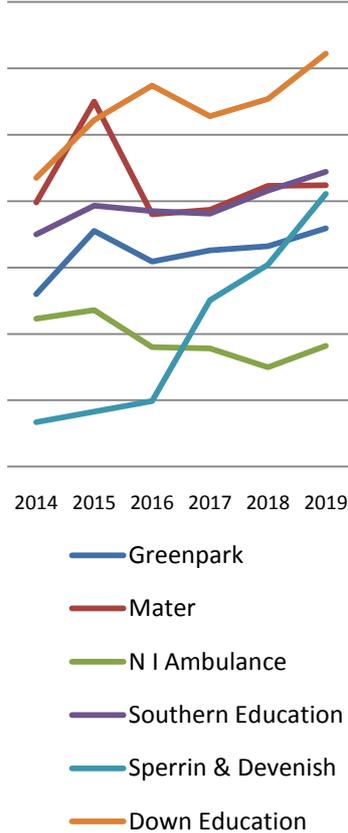


Fig 4: 1201-1700 members

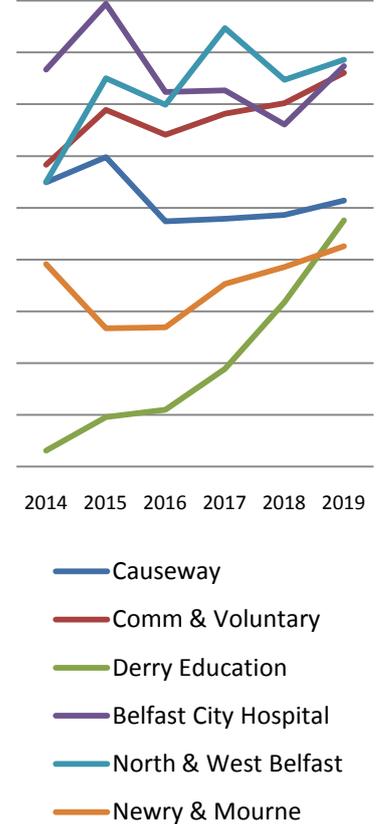


Fig 5: 1601 - 2000 members

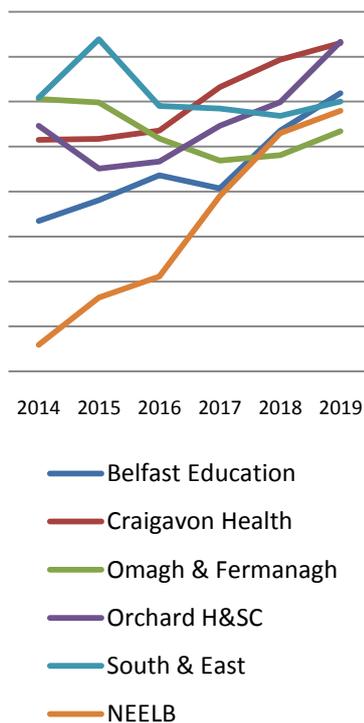
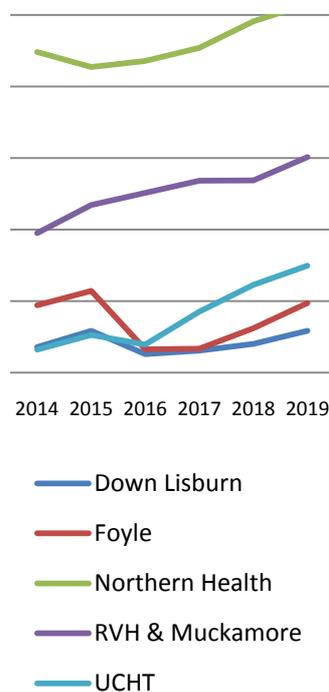


Fig 6: 2000+ members



The charts on this page show growth trends across branches from 2014 to 2019.

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

2019 - Recruitment achievements across key sectors and groups

Table 3 shows that the 2019 Fighting Fund projects, and additional branch-based recruitment initiatives, continue to result in high recruitment across sectors.

- 2227 new members (46%) have been recruited in health and social services;
- 876 (18%) have been recruited in education;
- 357 (7%) have been recruited in the community & voluntary sector;
- 1425 (29%) have been recruited in the private sector - including private homecare, contractors and private nursing homes.

This increase is very positive, particularly given that it has occurred at a time of ongoing cuts and job loss in health and an education service still facing the upheaval created by the formation of the Education Authority. Community and voluntary sector recruitment is being maintained at a high level but our membership continues to suffer

from funding cuts with much more to come as a result of EU exit. In the private sector, the Fighting Fund Private Homecare initiative has had a positive impact, but poor terms and conditions, particularly in homecare, continue to produce a higher than average attrition rate.

It is very positive that we continue to grow the proportion of young people joining UNISON with 1268 new members in the year to date – 26% of total recruitment during the period. Our challenge remains to grow the next generation of union leaders.



Table 3 - UNISON NI total recruitment by sector, 1 Jan to 30 Sept 2019

Recruitment figures by sector	Jan-Sept 2019	Jan-Sept 2018	Total for 2018
Health and social services (excluding private sector)	2277	2412	3153
Higher education	42	14	75
Education and other NJC	876	1052	1388
Community & Voluntary	357	344	436
Private sector (inc. private homecare, contractors, (Young members 26 and under)	1425	1536	1952
	(1268)	(1215)	(1543)
TOTAL	4977	5358	7004

2019 – The success of the Fighting Fund initiative

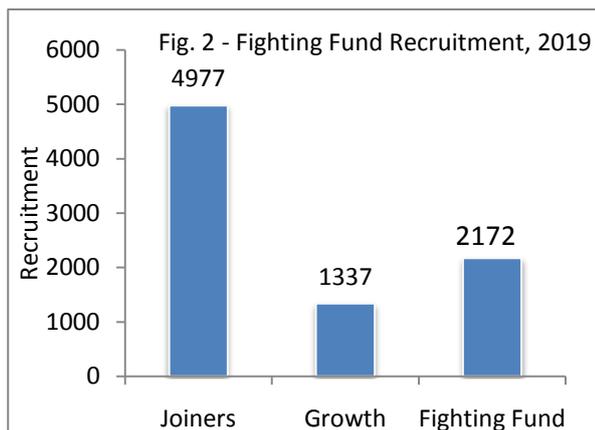
2019 has again been a very a successful year for the Fighting Fund initiative. In November 2018, 28 branches successfully secured funding for 10 projects which enabled 11 Fighting Fund Organiser posts to be created for the 12 month duration of the projects.

Commencing in February 2019, the majority are multi-branch projects covering health, education, the community and voluntary sector, and our 2 University branches which have a combination of in-house and private sector membership.

Outcomes - recruitment: Figure 2 shows that:

- Fighting Fund Local Organisers have recruited 2172 new members to date across the participating branches. This is 28% ahead of where we would expect to be at this stage of the initiative;
- recruitment by FFOs has contributed 44% of the total number of new members recruited by UNISON NI over the year;
- the initiative has also continued to have a positive impact on wider activist recruitment, with branches recruiting an additional 2805 new members over and above those directly recruited by FFOs during the period.

It is clear that there is a correlation between the quantum of Fighting Fund resources allocated to a branch and subsequent recruitment success.



Outcomes - Building the activist base: The presence of Fighting Fund Organisers continues to assist in building both the activist base and member participation. FFOs have been involved in identifying new leaders and their recruitment

activity has enabled Area Organisers to devote additional time to building the steward base and encouraging greater membership participation in the life of the union.

Outcomes - Bargaining and representation: Having dedicated Fighting Fund Organisers has also improved representation and introduced new items for the bargaining agenda. The FFOs have identified issues in areas arising from direct contact with members. The process for onward referral of these issues to branch secretaries and regional organisers is designed to improve the union's response to issues affecting the members.

Regional Committee has flagged the importance of developing alternatives when the Fighting Fund project comes to an end. This also forms part of our Review of Democratic Participation.

2019 – The success of other special recruitment initiatives

We continue to prioritise special recruitment initiatives in those sectors with a traditionally high turnover of staff such as private nursing homes and private homecare. During 2019, these initiatives have resulted in:

- 438 new members in private homecare;
- 774 new members in private nursing homes.

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

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

A key vehicle for delivering on this strategy is the private homecare project. The project has been running for a number of years and brings together the RMT, organising staff and our 10 branches with private homecare members. During 2019 the joint branch bid again secured the resources for a 12 month project. To date, 438 new members have

been recruited during the duration of the current project and we now have a total of 1532 members in the sector across 51 companies.



Private nursing home project/ Migrant workers: This project is a successful Regional Committee bid and is particularly important. Between 15,000 to 20,000 staff work in hundreds of nursing and residential homes with the vast majority in the private sector. Major employers include Four Seasons, Runwood, Brooklands and Priory.

Whilst UNISON is the largest union organising in the sector, the potential for recruitment is huge, particularly amongst migrant workers who make up an increasing proportion of staff in these homes and UNISON membership.

Recruiting and organising the migrant workforce is a UNISON priority, particularly in the context of concerns about care standards, employment standards and EU Exit. Both EU nationals and other migrant workers are facing major employment issues associated with their employment status, immigration policies, racism and discrimination.

To date 774 new members have been recruited in private nursing homes during the duration of the current project and we now have a total of 2671 members in the sector, across 140 companies.

Self-organised group recruitment: Our self organised groups continue to support branches through direct recruitment linked to equality campaigns; increased recruitment of young members; the organisation of events for members, their families and communities; and raising UNISON's profile in key bargaining, campaigning and policy areas.

Some notable activities in 2019 include:

- Women's Committee direct action on the WASPI campaign, violence against women, and through bargaining demands on menopause and other women's health issues;
- our LGBT group, in conjunction with local branches, have run recruitment initiatives

at Pride and other events in Belfast, Newry and Derry;

- our Black and Migrant Workers' Group have organised a series of support and recruitment events;
- our Young Members' Forum has prioritised the campaign for abortion rights in NI;
- our Disability Group has supported recruitment with its focus on improving mental health in the workplace; and
- our Retired Members' Forum continues to support direct branch recruitment and regional initiatives.

UNISON-wide recruitment initiatives:

Regional Committee threw its full weight behind the 'Grovember' and 'Go for Growth' union-wide recruitment initiatives in November 2018 and May 2019 respectively. Grovember brought in 791 new members and 'Go for Growth' brought in 690. The 'Grovember' campaign will run again in 2019.



Building branch and workplace organisation

■ Branch Development

Preparing for the future - A Review of the democratic participation of our members: In October 2018, UNISON NI Regional Council passed a Resolution instructing Regional Committee to undertake a 'Review of the democratic participation of our members' in line with the union's Rulebook, existing NEC Guidance and previous decisions of the Regional Council.

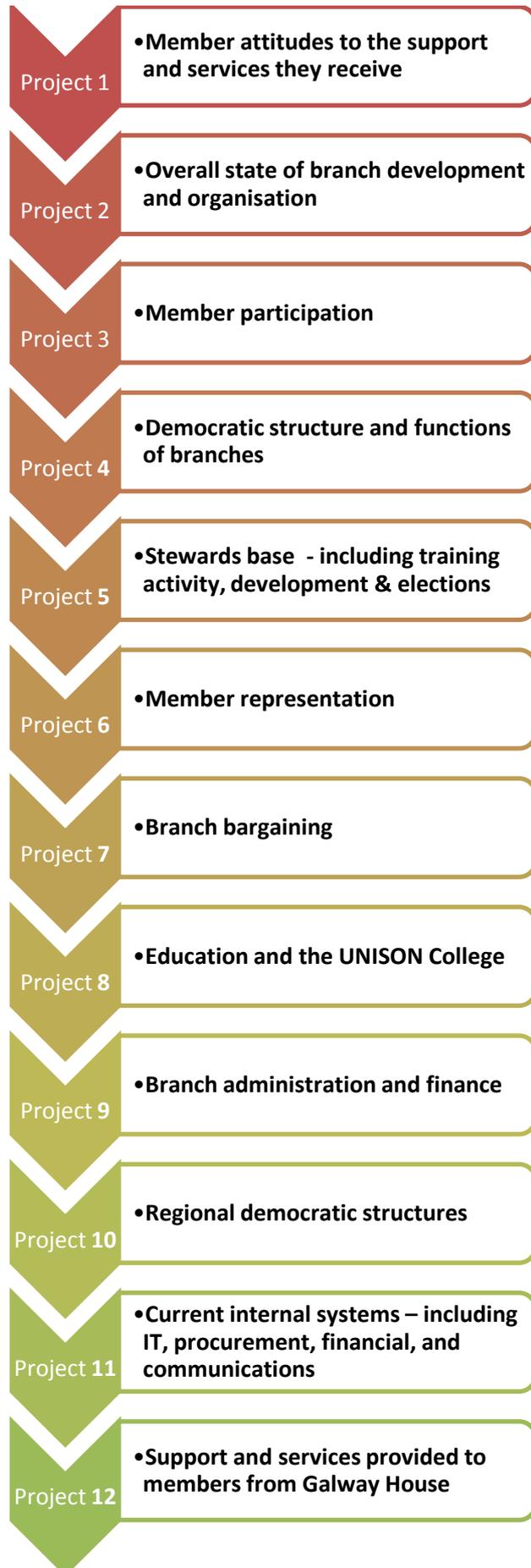
More specifically, the Resolution called on Regional Committee to assess our current structures, organisation and allocation of resources and to explore what we can do

differently, and what we can do better to prepare for the future. At its subsequent meeting in January 2019, Regional Committee agreed that two distinct reviews would take place. They are taking the form of a number of projects examining key areas of our activity at regional, branch and workplace level.

Review 1: Review of the democratic participation of our members

Review 2: Review of UNISON staff support, services and systems

Review of Democratic Participation – The Projects



Oversight of Review 1 was delegated to the Democratic Participation Review Group with projects jointly led by members of the Branch Development Group and UNISON staff.

Projects within Review 2 were led by the Regional Management Team, relevant line managers and directly involve all staff.

Update reports were made to Regional Committee in April, June and September and a further update will be provided to Regional Council. Findings from each Review are also supporting Regional Council 2018 Resolution 20, and we have submitted a business case for increased staffing resources in this context.

Work on the review so far has identified a number of key challenges facing branch committees and regional lay structures. The staffing review supports the Regional Council decision that additional resources are required and a business case has now been submitted.

Member and activist survey: To inform the Review projects, in June 2019 a survey was distributed to over 30,000 UNISON members to help us better understand:

- why and how do people join us?;
- whether members are satisfied that we are meeting their needs and expectations, particularly with regard to support, protection at work, communications and member services;
- the extent of member engagement and participation;
- our visibility in the workplace;
- the reasons members decide to become active and their subsequent participation at branch committees, in decision-making, and in recruitment, representation and other key organising activities;
- the challenges facing activists in their role;
- the lessons that can be learned from the experience of former activists.



Over 3300 surveys were completed including 193 by current activists and 184 by former activists.

Analysis of the initial survey findings show the following:

- High proportions of UNISON members believe in the trade union movement, its values and are proud of their union.
- A high majority believe that we make a difference in the workplace, but a minority think that we make a difference in local communities.
- A high proportion are satisfied with other key UNISON services and activities including the relevance of our communications, and our responsiveness to their views.
- There is high awareness of our free education, legal, financial and welfare services but much work still needs to be done to increase participation and uptake.
- It is clear that action also needs to be taken to increase member engagement and participation in branch and union-wide activity; and to ensure that there is proper representation of women, young members and black and migrant workers as elected branch officers.

Importantly, the survey also identified the key challenges/barriers facing activists in their role. Many of these challenges mirror the reasons given by former activists for stepping away from union activity. A key outcome of the Review will therefore be to mitigate some of the key home and work related pressures facing this core group. More on the survey findings will be presented at Regional Council.

Regional Committee is commencing the 2nd phase of the Review and will be consulting with branch and regional structures in the coming months.

Joint branch assessments, activity based budgets and their implementation: The new online branch assessment tool has been successfully incorporated into the full-day assessment process. This is to make sure everyone in the branch committee understands how branch finance works, and uses that information to resource the branch plan.



Our organisers and RMS staff support branches by using our database to create up to date pictures of the members, structures and democratic participation in each branch. This enables branch committees to participate in informed assessments. These maps set out very clearly:

- the geographic spread of our members;
- the number of employers;
- the location and occupation of all members in each employer and workplace;
- the level of steward cover for each;
- the potential for recruitment;
- actual recruitment by employer, location and occupation;
- actual leavers on the same basis;
- financial health and branch budget to implement the branch plan.

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

Budgets are now developed using the computer based OLBA programme. As part of the regional support programme for all branches, Regional Committee continues to offer services on both the general branch management of funds and on budgeting. Where the use of OLBA becomes inactive, the Committee instructs that special support be given to the relevant branches.

Our staff team works in partnership with branch teams and, where necessary, the branch development group steps in to give additional support where difficulties arise.

Branch plans only work if they are translated into core agenda items at monthly branch committee meetings and activity is measured. The extent that this is happening is currently part of the Stage 2 Review.

Branch Secretaries Forum: During 2019 the Forum agenda has been reviewed to increase branch participation. Key issues discussed have included branch and regional strategies for challenging cuts, the sharing of best practice recruitment initiatives; and developing the evidence base that is under-pinning the Review of democratic participation.

Regional Pool: Regional Pool funding was at one point tied to the programme of branch finance top-ups. The final top-ups were paid to branches in the current quarter and the process is now at an end. The Regional Pool is now open again to branch and lay structure bids.

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

- a copy of the branch assessment form, signed by the branch secretary and regional organiser;
- a copy of the branch accounts and the previous year's annual return;
- the detailed and costed plan for the proposed activity.

Bids must support *innovative* organising, recruitment and member participation activities that would not otherwise be funded from branch funds.

Campaign Fund: The General Political Fund is now known as the Campaign Fund. Branches and groups wishing to make applications are advised to contact the regional office for assistance.

Regional Committee continued our programme of political campaigning, including activities to mark the 20th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement; support for our work in protecting the Peace Process in the context of exiting the EU; and engaging with political party conferences.

We also held an extremely successful conference in tribute to our late colleague Jonathan Swallow. This event marked the 70th anniversary of the NHS and was a forum to influence the ongoing debates on reform of our health and social care system.



Regional Committee also received Campaign Fund support to produce a manifesto for the European Parliamentary elections in May.

A number of NI branches have previously made successful bids to the Fund. Bids are assessed by the Regional Implementation Group according to strict criteria established by the NEC.

Bids must take account of the union's campaign priorities and will primarily involve expenditure of a clearly political nature.

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

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

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

- campaigns that directly involve members and highlight the value of specific public services such as school meals, NHS, ambulance, and the contribution of support staff to the healthcare team.

Such projects would also involve local communities;

- projects on strengthening the knowledge and values of trade unionism, including uncovering local trade union history and women's history;
- projects which enable the development of self-organisation on a cross-branch or geographical basis;
- projects which use solidarity campaigns to strengthen awareness of trade union values.



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

Measuring organising success – Branch development indicators: Stage 2 of the Review of democratic participation takes an in-depth look at the key indicators to assess the democratic health of our branches.

From the activist survey it is clear that most elected representatives are under pressure. However, the extent of pressure from work-life balance is much greater than we thought and is a key factor in the development of women stewards and activists in particular.

In most cases, branches have vacancies in core branch posts, thus increasing pressure on the remaining activists or putting some branches outside compliance with rules.

Regional Committee currently uses some basic indicators which point to areas of support needed by some of our branches. From the survey results we now know that we have to go deeper if we are to achieve the quality and quantity of elected representatives needed to organise and represent our members.

Table 4 indicates the paid release resources available to branches and the current position on branch assessment and plans. It also tracks attendance at the Branch Secretaries Forum and Team UNISON, where much information is exchanged; progress on the stewards' base; and the extent of proportionality.

Currently, democracy in decision-making is tracked in the section on branch minutes and is essential to ensure that decisions are democratically taken and recorded including decisions relating to budgets, income and expenditure. These indicators will change for the 2020 annual report.

Measuring organising success – Branch participation: As can be seen from Table 5, branch participation in those areas required by Rule is high. However, in most cases participation is confined to a relatively small group of activists and can mask workload and participation problems faced by many branch committees. Solutions to these issues will result from the Stage 2 Review exercise.

The final columns relate to branch participation in their own local public meetings and demonstrations, those organised by UNISON on an NI-wide basis, and participation in marches and demonstrations organised under the umbrella of ICTU. In 2019, most branches directly organised their own protests and demonstrations on a range of issues.



Table 4 - Branch development indicators, 2018/19

Branch	Paid release	Branch Assessment	Attended BS Forum /Team UNISON	Mapped	1 year growth trend - 2019	New stewards from Oct 2018		Branch minutes on File?
						Women	Men	
Belfast City Hospital	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑20	3	5	Yes
Belfast Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑61	6	0	Yes
Causeway	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑11	4	0	Yes
Community & Vol	A&W	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑96	1	1	Yes
Craigavon Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑9	0	1	Yes
Derry Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑123	3	2	Yes
Down & Lisburn	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑92	4	2	Yes
Down Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑95	3	1	Yes
Foyle Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑114	4	0	Yes
Greenpark Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑2	1	1	Yes
Health Agencies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑18	2	1	Yes
Mater Hospital	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↓-1	3	2	Yes
N & W Belfast Trust	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑53	3	0	Pending
NE Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑84	4	1	Yes
Newry & Mourne	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑26	2	2	Yes
NI Ambulance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑34	1	7	Yes
NI Blood Transfusion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑1	0	0	Pending
Northern Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑58	18	6	Yes
Omagh & Fermanagh	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑52	0	0	Yes
Orchard H&SC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑69	0	1	Yes
Rathgael	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑1	0	0	Yes
RVH & Muckamore	Yes	Joint	Yes	Yes	↑94	5	4	Yes
S & E Belfast	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↓-29	4	0	Yes
Southern Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑48	2	0	Yes
Sperrin & Devenish	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑123	2	1	Yes
UCHT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	↑85	0	3	Yes
UU Coleraine	A&W	Yes	No	Yes	↑3	0	2	Yes
UU Jordanstown	A&W	Yes	No	Yes	↓-7	0	0	Yes

Vote
yes
for
strike action



UNISON
Northern Ireland



We won't be left behind!

Table 5- Branch participation, 2018/19

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

■ Membership participation and building the stewards base

Annual General Meetings: All AGMS were completed by end March 2019. As part of the 2nd stage of the Review of democratic participation, the conduct of AGMs is being reviewed to ensure:

- that member participation is maximised and quorums are met, for example through improved communications and newsletters;
- that core posts and positions on regional structures are filled; and
- that aggregate meetings take place in accessible venues.

Direct member involvement: The extent of direct member involvement in branch activity and decision-making is a core part of the

Review. Once again, thousands of our members have been directly involved in demonstrations, lobbies, challenging Board meetings in the public sector and lobbying political parties and local politicians.

Members have also participated in UNISON surveys and directly in the ICTU Better Work, Better Lives campaign.

UNISON HQ is developing a new platform to enhance communications across the union. Our branches continue to develop their own social media platforms. Support is provided by the Communications Assistant.

Branches have also taken advantage of the bulk emailing system and the text messaging services available from the Regional Centre.

Steward base: Regional Committee continues to identify support, and to train as many members as possible to take on the core role of UNISON workplace steward.

Regional Committee has identified building and developing the stewards base as a core outcome of the Democratic Review process and will bring forward recommendations:

- to develop our stewards training programme;
- to increase activity and develop new stewards within branches;
- to maximise democratic participation through the stewards election process;
- to increase our base and fill gaps to ensure proportionality and fair representation.

We have already identified the work-life balance issues and the lack of childcare as barriers to many of our women members. As a consequence of the current Review, Regional Committee will make recommendations on new approaches to supporting new stewards. On the evidence

gathered to date this is likely to include a review of release and the childcare support provided by branches and employers.

The drop in the number of women Branch Secretaries in 2019 (Table 6) gives us cause for concern and will now be discussed with all branch committees.



Get elected: The “Get Elected” campaign is being re-run between October and December 2019, with each branch working to a programme with organising staff to encourage members to stand for election as local shop stewards.

Table 6: Proportionality by activist post

Activist Position	Total 2019	Women 2019	Men 2019	Women 2018	Men 2018
Branch Secretaries	44	59%	41%	69%	31%
Branch Chairs	41	66%	34%	62%	38%
Branch Treasurers	51	73%	27%	79%	21%
Other Branch Posts	134	54%	46%	52%	48%
Workplace Stewards	495	64%	36%	65%	35%
Contacts	201	89%	11%	88%	12%
Total	966	68%	32%	69%	31%

■ Branch funding

Total income returned to Head Office increased to £4,219,992. This represents a 5.3% increase on the previous year.

Total income returned to branches for 2018 increased to £1,049,438. This represents a 6.8% increase on the previous year.

Regional Committee commends our branches for supporting the Fighting Fund initiative and also for increasingly sharing resources on a geographic and cross-sectoral basis. This is of particular importance to branches covering a mainly rural membership and to smaller branches. Consideration will also be given to joint bids to the Regional Pool and the Campaign Fund.

Participation & Structures

Proportionality and fair representation and operation of UNISON NI structures

The gender distribution of our membership in NI is 83% women and the Constitution of **Regional Council** ensures proportionality. Branches and other lay structures fully co-operate to ensure that delegates are proportional on the basis of gender. Self-organised groups and specialist groups participate. Branch attendance at 2018 Council was 86% and 70% of delegates were women.

The **Regional Committee** met in formal session 4 times since last Regional Council. The Committee currently has 40 members and its composition currently stands at 70% women. All meetings were quorate. The agenda was dominated by progress on union building, our campaigns against austerity, crises in the political system, and the implications of EU exit.

Our delivery on UNISON’s core objectives and priorities in all four main areas of work are detailed throughout the report.

Regional Committee members also devote additional time to organising priorities through our sub groups as set out in Table 8 below.



WASPI campaigners from UNISON NI protest state pension reforms at the High Court in London, June 2019

Table 8 – Regional Committee sub-structures

Branch development group	Education group	Regional pool group	Regional implementation group (also Campaign Fund)
Gabrielle Carton Denis Keatings Margaret McKee Lucia McKeever <i>to June 19</i> Alastair Long Stephanie Greenwood Carol Hall Niall McCarroll Conor McCarthy	Gabrielle Carton Denis Keatings Carol Hall Maura McKenna Deborah Yapicioz <i>Representatives from Branch Education Officers, ULRs, lay tutors</i>	Gabrielle Carton Denis Keatings Margaret McKee Lucia McKeever Alastair Long Roisin Byrne Nicky Shaw Deborah Yapicioz	Gabrielle Carton Denis Keatings Margaret McKee Lucia McKeever <i>to June 19</i> Gillian Foley <i>from June 19</i> Alastair Long Patricia McKeown

Our joint **Regional Convenors**, Gabrielle Carton and Denis Keatings, were re-elected at 2018 Regional Council and have presided over all formal meetings of our regional lay structures and a series of important engagements at HQ level and with other regions. The Convenors have been active in securing commitments on resources, the development of the Campaign Fund, and arrangements with the centre on handling political devolution. They are currently

involved in working groups established by the NEC to take forward some of the key resource motions agreed at the 2019 NDC.

NEC: Margaret McKee, Alastair Long and Gillian Foley are the NEC members for NI. Lucia McKeever retired in June 2019. Her contribution as both NEC member and past-President was acknowledged at the 2018 Regional Council.



ICTU Women's seminar, Newcastle - March 2019

UNISON is represented on the ICTU Women's Committee by Margaret McKee (Vice Chair) and Danielle McCusker. Both reps, along with the Regional Secretary and the Head of Bargaining, attended the TU Women's Council of the Isles in Dublin in September 2018. The next meeting of the Council will take place in London in November 2019.

Work programme: Our 2019 work programme covers:

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

To advance our work programme, we have established some working groups on menopause, violence against women and WASPI.

International Women's Day: The theme of this year's IWD was #balanceforbetter, a call to action for driving gender balance across the world. The Committee organised a very successful event on 12 March in the UNISON building 'Women in UNISON – We are here!'

UNISON NI saw its biggest turnout for the 2019 International Women's Day rally in March. People of all ages danced, shouted and sang their way to City Hall in a colourful procession that celebrated the work of women's organisations and charities. Some of those marching were in fancy dress, with placards and props held high calling for gender equality here.

A "minute's noise" was held in place of a minute's silence, in remembrance of Giselle and Allison Marmion-Herrera, victims of domestic violence who were murdered in Newry. Speakers called for reproductive rights for women, equal marriage rights and an end to period poverty for those living in NI.

The event tracked the history of the first women trade union organisers through to today's activists, and the battle for women's rights at work, in their unions and in society. We were also delighted to welcome colleagues from the new union Forsa.

Regional education programme: Committee members continued to deliver the women only element of the regional education programme with 119 women members attending our building confidence for women; pathways; and women's health and history courses. These are particularly designed to encourage more women to become active. This year 47 new women activists attended the Pathways programme. The Health and History weekends took place in Coleraine and Newcastle with a total of 44 participants.



Members at the women's Pathways course

WASPI: A delegation from the Committee attended the “Back to 60” Judicial Review in the High Court, London in June 2019. This challenged the legality of the decision to change the pension age of women born in the 1950s. The Judicial Review was unsuccessful and the Committee is currently assessing how to take the campaign forward.

In the meantime, we continue to raise awareness of this issue amongst our members and run information sessions. At the time of the Judicial Review, UNISON NI WASPI women were interviewed about the impact of the changes on their lives for both the BBC and ITV.



Women in prisons: During 2019, Committee members have completed 2 sessions of the Health and History course with women prisoners at Hydebank and another one has been scheduled for November. Additional members are now trained as lay tutors to lead these sessions.

Women’s Committee Banner: The Committee is planning to replace the current banner and members recently participated in

a workshop to get them thinking about what we want our banner to represent.

Two child tax credit Cap: The Committee has been encouraging our members to sign the petition to repeal the two child limit on tax credits and universal credit.

Better Work Better Lives: In June 2019 representatives from the Committee attended the launch of the ‘Better Work, Better Lives’ campaign policy document, ‘Childcare in NI - cost, care and gender equality’. It is the first of 5 proposed policy papers.

In April, in partnership with Somali Women’s Action Network (SWAN), we held a major conference in Belfast on raising awareness and managing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in NI. FGM is part of gender-based violence, coercion and control which must end. The conference called for increased awareness raising of FGM in communities and training for childcare workers and those working in education, health, community & voluntary sector, as well as professionals such as social workers, GP’s, police and border force officers.

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

The work of the Women’s Committee is supported by temporary Regional Organiser, Marianne Buick and Area Organiser, Danielle McCusker.

■ LGBT+ Group

The LGBT+ Group has 141 registered members representing 26 branches across NI. Since 2018 Regional Council, the Group has had 3 formal meetings.

This year we had a number of highs and lows. We are delighted that UNISON’s National Conference passed a motion to change LGBT to LGBT+ to recognise the inclusion of non-binary members within our movement, receiving a Belfast Pride award and the impending change in legislation on marriage equality. However, we were stunned by the

murder of Lyra McKee in April by dissident Republicans.

Campaigning for Marriage Equality: *Love Equality* (which comprises of ICTU, Amnesty NI, Student Movement and LGBT+ organisations) has been leading this campaign for the past number of years and UNISON has been proud to play an active role through our photo frame campaign and participation at events and rallies. In May rallies were held in Belfast and Derry to highlight the continuing absence of marriage equality in NI. Once again UNISON members turned out in force.

Our photo frame campaign continued at activities we ran in late 2018 and into 2019. Over the past two years we engaged over 1000 staff and members of the public who posed with our 'I Support Marriage Equality' frame and the photos were shared widely on the UNISON NI Facebook.

With the amendment introduced by Labour MP Conor McGinn and supported by Lord Hayward, it is now very likely that marriage equality will be introduced by Westminster and will come into effect in January 2020. However, UNISON is very proud of the role we played in winning the hearts and minds by promoting inclusive workplaces and being a very visible element of the movement for change.



Murder of Lyra McKee: As a proud NUJ member, Lyra had been involved in UNISON delivering training to our activists and was supportive of the work of our LGBT+ Group. In the wake of her murder, a walk from Belfast to Derry was organised to highlight the failure of politicians to implement the Good Friday Agreement. Staff member Fidelma Carolan walked 35 miles of the journey and UNISON branch members came out along the way by walking part of it and attending the rally in Guildhall Square at the end.

Engaging with the Wider LGBT Community & Branches

Outburst Queer Arts Festival Nov 2018 – In partnership with the RVH & Muckamore branch, we hosted Richard O’Leary’s one man show ‘Cut’. UNISON has been a constant supporter of Outburst since its inception as it uses local and international radical and cutting edge drama, art, music and spoken word to explore challenging issues within LGBT+ life.

Alternative Eurovision Event - As part of LGBT Awareness Week in May, UNISON along with the Derry branch of Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign organised an Alternative Eurovision night. It was live streamed and sold out with local personalities, political representatives and members of the LGBT+ community taking part.

It generated a great buzz in the city and most importantly highlighted the issue of oppression of the Palestinian people, counteracting the Israeli 'pinkwashing' of hosting this year’s Eurovision. As it was live streamed, UNISON’s LGBT+ solidarity committee hosted a social event in our Belfast office where people could come along and enjoy an Alternative Eurovision night. The event raised £2500 for a UNISON supported project in Palestine and £2800 for Medical Aid for Palestine.

Pride Festivals – This year (in addition to events in Belfast, Derry and Newry) Larne held its first ever Pride festival. Newry Pride was the nominated UK and Ireland Pride and pulled out all the stops. For us Pride is about visibility and an opportunity to contribute by hosting activities and being part of the festivals, not just as sponsors. Running events enables us to be included in the programme which raises our profile with the LGBT+ community and the wider public. There is an issue about the extent of corporate sponsorship of some of the Pride marches and ICTU is scheduled to discuss this with the Belfast Pride Committee.

Once again branches came out and walked with their banners in Belfast, Foyle and Newry prides and members attended the Larne one day festival. Our Group co-chair, Martin McConnellogue represents UNISON on the Foyle Pride festival committee and he has played a significant role in increasing our contribution to LGBT+ community in the North West. Foyle Pride does not accept corporate sponsorship.

For Foyle Pride we invited Dave Merchant from the national committee to deliver an activism workshop for young trans people in partnership with the Rainbow Project. Dave also participated on a panel discussion entitled

'Pride As Protest'. We also co-hosted a Journeys LGBT+ story telling event which was held in Strabane for the first time.

We supported the screening of Stephen Birkett's novel, 'Ulster Alien', about his own life coming out as a gay man in Derry in the 1970s. This event attracted over 100 people. During the week Martin was interviewed on Foyle Radio about the various events.



For Belfast Pride, we organised an Advice and a Slice early evening event in the beer garden of the Sunflower Bar. We set up stalls with our own local reps, Thompsons NI solicitors, the Equality Commission, Public Health Agency and the Belfast Trust GUM clinic. Fidelma Carolan participated on Radio Ulster's Talkback current affairs programme about how Pride has changed over the years.

During Newry Pride, we organised a Big Gay Acoustic Karaoke night to raise funds for SAIL which supports transgender families. This was a great night's craic and the local mayor called by to wish us well.

Belfast Pride Award - UNISON was nominated for a Belfast Pride Award and there was an online public vote. The announcements were made at the Pride Launch which was held in Belfast City Hall and we were delighted to win. The Pride teddy award was collected by our co-chair and NEC member Gillian Foley and members of our Group.

LGBT+ Staff Forum Hospital Stalls - In July and August we had lunchtime LGBT+ stalls supported by the local branches in 11 hospitals and 1 HSC site. These were held in partnership with the Health Service LGBT+ Staff forum in the Royal, Mater, Belfast City, Lagan Valley,

Musgrave, the Ulster, Altnagelvin, Causeway, the Downe, Craigavon and Daisy Hill hospitals as well as in the Public Health Agency.

The branches were very supportive, with UNISON goodies to give away and local reps helping on the stalls. The purpose was to invite staff to support their local Pride Festival and increase workplace visibility through the distribution of rainbow lanyards, LGBT+ posters and literature. Overall, we distributed more than 1000 rainbow lanyards and 200 LGBT posters to promote inclusive workplaces.

Supporting Other Staff Fora – Following an attempt by a former DUP MLA to block the establishment of a LGBT+ Staff forum for members within the Education Authority, UNISON lobbied to support its introduction. We appeared on radio to debate the issue with a current DUP MLA and engaged with the Education Authority's Equality team to share our experience of instigating the Health & Social Care LGBT+ forum. We hope that this will be up and running within the next few months.

Trans Healthcare Policy Launch: In July UNISON hosted the launch of a new Trans Healthcare Policy Report – The Future of Trans Healthcare. It was attended by over 50 members of the LGBT+ community, advocacy organisations, journalists and politicians. The paper focused on issues for trans people accessing appropriate healthcare in a timely fashion and the many barriers which face them. The UNISON LGBT+ committee has put forward a motion to Regional Council endorsing the policy and we look forward to supporting trans members in progressing the issues in the future.

Peace by Peace Intersectionality Conference: In September, UNISON hosted over 70 people from the LGBT+ community, peace and reconciliation groups and human rights organisations to discuss intersectionality and the role of LGBT+ people in the Peace Process. The event featured talks from Karen McShane, Mary Montague and Eileen Weir on the theme of *Our 'Queer' intersectional and intersectoral perspectives on peace*.

There was also an afternoon panel session with Marie Quiery, Duncan Morrow, Tony O'Reilly and Hamsa Rajeswaren. The day also included a performance by Queertopia and photographic work on the themes of Troubles and Peace.

Other Events: As part of LGBT+ Awareness Week we co-hosted two workshops with the UNISON education team - Transgender awareness and Supporting LGBT+ people who access homecare or residential care. This allowed us to engage directly with members to promote better responses from professionals who engage with LGBT+ people.



Social Media: Our LGBT+ Facebook page continues to be very active and our photos from the various Pride parades and events attracted lots of engagement. LGBT+ members received 8 ebulletins over the last year informing them on LGBT+ events, research, campaigns and activities.

The work of the LGBT Group is supported by Regional Organiser, Education, Fidelma Carolan.

■ Disability Group

The Disability Group has met 3 times since last Regional Council. While branch nominations have increased, sickness impacted on attendance throughout 2019. We continue to encourage branches to take up their entitlement to 2 places.

Committees, conferences and events: UNISON is represented on the ICTU Disability Committee by Lee Chestnutt and Ricky Kennedy; on the UNISON National Disability Committee by Amanda Sweetlove; and on Regional Committee by Paul Allen.

In February 2019, delegates attended the ICTU Disability seminar. Regional Organiser Joe McCusker was a Guest Speaker and gave a presentation on 'Developing a Mental Health in the Workplace Policy.'

Workplan: The key elements of our workplan for 2019/20 are as follows.

- Disability Action Plans - All public bodies in NI are required to produce a Disability Action Plan and also submit it for approval to the Equality Commission. The Committee is assessing each of these plans and making recommendations to branches and negotiators to determine if action has been taken on 2 key areas - selection & recruitment and training.

- Welfare reform - Deepening our involvement in the campaign on welfare reform and its impact on people with disabilities.
- Mental health in the workplace – Campaigning on mental health issues in the workplace including raising the profile of its impact on workers, highlighting the benefits for employers, the necessity for workplace agreements, flexible working, reasonable adjustments, and training for UNISON activists.
- Audit of UNISON branches to determine the support needed for existing branch reps to use UNISON's extensive guides and materials and to encourage members with disabilities to become more active in the union. Materials include:
 - Mental health bargaining guide,
 - Proving disability and reasonable adjustments guide,
 - Disability leave guide and model policy,
 - Health and safety guide,
 - Stress toolkit and stress guide for safety reps.

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

■ Black and Migrant Workers' Group

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

We have been affected by retirements and some workers returning to their countries of origin. In response, we organised a programme of branch meetings to encourage new Group members to join, to stand for election as stewards, and to join their branch committees.

Unfortunately, we are no longer in a position to provide accurate figures for black and migrant workers in UNISON. Since the introduction of GDPR and the switch to new recruitment forms, no ethnic monitoring information is collated, leaving us with 'guestimates' rather than proper data. This is an issue that has been raised by our Group. We introduced an additional form to accompany recruitment but this has not been successful so far.

Communications: The Group continues to meet bi-monthly and sends e-bulletins to all black and migrant worker members and to branches after each meeting. Our Facebook page continues to be a busy platform for information sharing.

The group produced new BMW leaflets. This allows us to have information to hand for new members, giving them an overview of the Group and information about the immigration advice clinics and the English classes available.

Conferences and events: A full delegation attended Black Members Conference in January 2019 in Brighton. For the first time, migrant workers and immigration issues (including the Windrush scandal) were high on the agenda. Speaker after speaker spoke of their own experience, and how their relatives had been affected. The UNISON NI motion, asking for access to immigration

advice, received a very warm welcome and was supported by a long line of speakers from other regions. We also sent a delegate to the national Black Members Committee.

Union activities and demonstrations: The Group was involved in regular union activities such as May Day, Pride, ICTU conference and various pickets organised at branch level.

EU Exit: Throughout 2019, the Group has been involved in EU Exit activities such as addressing the BrexitLaw conference, attending Home Office briefings; and involvement in NICRE conferences.

We organised a workshop in Altnagelvin with a CAJ adviser targeting our migrant frontier workers (e.g. living in Donegal and working in Altnagelvin). At the time of writing this report, we still have no answer for these members despite constant assurances given by the Home Office that a specific scheme would be put in place.

A series of stalls in all major hospitals was organised in September / October 2019 in conjunction with the Migrant Centre NI and Advice NI to ensure all European migrant workers have the information and support they need to register for Settled Status. This is giving the Group an opportunity to have stalls in all hospitals alongside the EU Settlement Scheme information stall, increasing our visibility throughout the region and connecting with migrants in all different branches. Two central information evenings are also being organised in the Belfast and Derry offices.



The Group has continued to support other BME organisations and attend various events and celebrations. In July, the Group was involved in organising a workshop with CANS (Counselling of all Nations) with regards to the mental health needs of BME communities in NI. Earlier in the year the group attended meetings with ACSONI (African Caribbean support organisation NI). We also attended and supported the Filipino Barrio Fiesta celebration in August.

One of our members, Veronica Fuenzalida from the RVH & Muckamore branch, featured in the City of Sanctuary publication 'A part of Belfast now', sharing the stories of people from "Belfast new communities". The publication is also sponsored by UNISON.



UNISON supporting the Filipino Barrio Fiesta event in Grosvenor Community Centre, August 2019

Supporting Refugees: Regional Committee continues to support refugees through our education programme and we had to increase our number of English classes this year due to their popularity. The immigration clinics continue to attract a substantial number of refugees and asylum seekers referred by community organisations (Red Cross; Extern; Barnardos; Niacro etc.). Our group also sponsored and participated in events organised by City of Sanctuary such as the Big Refugee Picnic as part of Refugee week at the end of June.

Campaigns on immigration issues: Our main campaign internally continues to be to get access to immigration representation through our UNISON legal representatives. We are also campaigning against the health surcharge, a set fee that all new migrants must pay in order to access health services.

New migrants pay for health services through their taxes as everyone else, yet they must also pay an additional £400 per year when they apply to come here. It applies to non EEA migrants currently but will extend to all migrants in a post Brexit scenario. We are also working closely with our policy officer regarding the upcoming immigration bill.

Immigration advice clinic: The immigration advice clinics have been increasingly busy throughout the year. We continue to get immigration queries raised by newly arrived members through branches. Not having access to immigration advice through our own legal representatives' makes supporting members very difficult.

While clinics and the immigration phone line would be sufficient for non-work related general immigration advice, the consequences of people not accessing the right immigration advice when facing a difficult work issue can be hugely damaging.

As it becomes increasingly apparent that employers will be questioning people's right to work and/or dismissing people on that basis as a consequence of Brexit, it is essential that we secure legal support for members in this position.

English classes: The Group worked with the Education team to set up an OET preparation class in September last year. This was very successful and we had to add a third IELTS class in April this year. We now have 3 different levels of IELTS preparation as well as a dedicated OET class for doctors and nurses only. Classes are weekly and the next assessment is again fully booked.

Table 8: English classes

Course	Total	Men	Women
IELTS 1	30	14	16
IELTS 2	11	7	4
IELTS 3	34	16	18
OET	24	8	16

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

Special issue groups

■ Retired Members' Forum

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

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

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

- opposing cuts in health, education, social care, and the welfare state;
- highlighting the implications of pensions reform and fuel poverty;
- domestic rates and corporation tax;
- transport and community safety;
- building relationships with the UNISON Youth Group and the ICTU Young Members Group.

Forum members participated in all UNISON rallies, strikes and demonstrations in opposition to cuts in public services, the welfare state and pensions. Members have continued to distribute UNISON information on this issue across wider trade union structures and community networks.

In addition to a big turn-out at the May Day march and rally, Forum members were well-represented at TV licence demos in Belfast and Derry. The Forum issued a very comprehensive newsletter three times this year.

Conferences and meetings: Members are active on a variety of UNISON, ICTU and NGO bodies and during 2019 have participated in:

- UNISON NI Regional Council and Regional Committee;
- UNISON National Delegate and Retired Members Conferences;
- ICTU Retired Workers Committee;
- Age Sector Platform;
- the National Pensioner's Convention annual Pensioners Parliament;

- local Pensioners Parliaments which brings together 200 pensioners on a wide range of campaigns and is organised by the Age Sector Platform.



The following Forum members represent UNISON NI on union bodies and external campaign initiatives.

- National UNISON Retired Members Committee - Martin Gallagher
- UNISON Retired Members Standing Orders Committee - Joyce Griffin
- UNISON NI Regional Committee - Anna McGonigle
- UNISON NI Women's Committee – Mary Ferris and Martha McGonigle
- Age Sector Platform - Martin Gallagher, Sarah McKeown and Victor Murphy
- National Pensioners Convention - Rosaleen Davidson and Mary Ferris
- ICTU Retired Members Committee - Angela Boorman and Archie Thomson
- UNISON National Conference - Martha McGonigle
- ICTU Biennial Conference - Angela Boorman and Archie Thomson
- UNISON Retired Members Conference - Noel Muldoon
- National Pensioners Convention Conference - Doris Warren

Comprehensive reports are made to the wider Forum and via the Regional Committee representative to both the Committee and Regional Council.

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

■ Young Members' Forum

The young member's forum met 7 times during 2019. Membership continues to grow year on year with 13 young members currently represented from 11 branches.

Conferences, committees and events: During 2019, members attended various rallies and events such as International Women's Day and May Day. Three of the young members attended the UNISON Pathways women's development course. They were subsequently elected as stewards and attended induction training.

Three members attended ICTU women's conference. After hearing from Alliance for Choice at this conference they took a very active role including volunteering for some of their events over the summer.

For the first time, National Young Members weekend was held in Belfast and our members invited Alliance for Choice to speak at the event. The subsequent issues raised dominated discussion and debate and put NI issues at the top of the agenda for the entire weekend. Many regions put forward motions in this area or expressed solidarity with our members.

It is the responsibility of the host region to welcome delegates and give a presentation.

Our members stepped up to this challenge, giving an overview of the current political situation in NI.

Advice and a Slice campaign: This year is the year of the young worker and our members launched their "Advice and a Slice" campaign. Some branches have taken the opportunity to hold an event in their area and other branches have scheduled events towards the end of the year. To date 5 sessions have been held covering 13 Branches.



The work of the Forum is supported by Area Organisers Susan Neill and Caitlin Ni Chathail.

■ Health & Safety Group

The Health and Safety Group met 3 times during 2019. Its key objectives remain:

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

Workers Memorial Day – 29th April 2019: 'Remember the dead, fight like hell for the living': On Workers Memorial Day members from 5 branches attended the wreath laying event at the Memorial Tree in the grounds of Stormont together with colleagues from other Unions. UNISON had the largest group of health and safety officers present.

Committees and events: UNISON is represented on the NIC/ICTU health and safety committee by Ray Rafferty (RVH & Muckamore branch) and Emma Jane Cullen (Orchard branch). Colin McKinnon

(Craigavon health branch) was elected to the national health and safety committee.

In March 2019, the UNISON national health & safety seminar took place in Belfast for the first time. Over 350 delegates attended from across UNISON. Ray Rafferty introduced conference on behalf of the Regional Secretary.

Workshops included emotional support in crisis, violence at work, musculoskeletal disorders, mental health for activists and successful H&S campaigning. Gordon McKay, UNISON President, was a keynote speaker at the afternoon session.



UNISON NI reps with 2018/19 UNISON President Gordon McKay at the national health & safety seminar, Belfast – March 2019

NIC/ICTU & H&S Executive NI Award 2019:

UNISON has submitted three nominations for the Rep of the Year award – Pat Neeson (Royal), John Crossan (Greenpark) and Emma Jane Cullen (Orchard). Interviews have been held and we are awaiting the outcome.

Training: UNISON continues our successful health and safety training programme.

During 2019:

- 48 reps attended the health & safety module 1 course (41% more than the 34 reps attending last year), with a further 38 reps returning for module 2.
- There was a large increase in numbers attending health, safety and wellbeing courses, up from 124 students on 2017/18 to 203 this year – a 64% increase.
- 17 members attended the dealing with bullying at work course, 82 attended the Dealing with stress course and 17 attended the foundations for personal resilience course.
- A new course on supporting staff with depression attracted 10 students.

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

Service groups

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

Regional Committee has encouraged stronger co-operation between the service groups, self-organised groups and special interest groups to ensure that equality issues in particular are a central focus of UNISON bargaining in all sectors. The work of the service groups and related lay structures is reported in detail in Section 2.

There are 49 members of the **Health Service Group** representing 16 branches. Its current composition is 63% women. This is an improvement on previous proportionality but still requires further action from branches. The group met 4 times since 2018 Regional Council and is fully functioning.

There are 22 members of the **Local Government and Education Service Group** representing 10 branches. Its composition currently stands at 68% women. This is a slight proportionality decrease which branches are asked to correct in the next nomination round. The group has met 4 times since last Regional Council and is fully functioning.

National representation

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

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

Table 9– UNISON national structures

NI REPRESENTATIVES	
NEC	Margaret McKee, Alastair Long, Gillian Foley, Lucia McKeever (retired June 2019)
Local Govt Service Group Executive	Gabrielle Carton and Daphne Harper
Health Service Group Executive	Roberta Magee, Maura McKenna and Jill Weir
Health Sector Committees	Ambulance – Alistair Long; Operational Services – John Murray; Nursing – Alan Philson; Science & Technical – Stephen McNeill (see 2018 report – 2 year term).
Higher Education	Election in progress
Women’s Committee	Anne McVicker, Deborah Yapicioz (Roberta Magee and Irene Graham to Feb 2019)
Disability Committee	Amanda Sweetlove
LGBT	Gillian Foley; Martin McConnellogue
National Young Members Forum	Lorna McLarnon; Jason Magee
Health and Safety	Colin McKinnon; Clare Martin (sub)
National Black Members Committee	Patrick Yu
National Retired Members	Martin Gallagher



Developing membership services

The UNISON College

UNISON College continues to offer the widest range of trade union education and member learning in the UK.

Over the past year we offered 252 sessions across 128 workshop topics. We engaged over 2600 activists and members offering courses designed to support people in their job and personal roles as well as build on trade union values and principles and to develop the skills and confidence necessary to effectively organise, negotiate, represent and campaign.

These courses ranged from half day to three day modules, with 80% of attendees being women. In addition, a small number of UNISON activists completed courses directly with ICTU. Many elements of this part of the programme are open to activists and members alike.

Our member learning programme which offers courses on personal development and continuing professional development is primarily aimed at members, but is also open to all elected UNISON representatives.

This part of the programme offered 82 topics which were attended by in excess of 1700 learners. In addition, 119 completed the Level 4 Open University K101 Introduction to health & social care module to August 2019 and this year's recruitment exceeded all previous years with 217 applications for the 2019/20 course.

Online applications for courses trebled and now form the bulk of engagement with members and activists. In September we launched the Education Course app <https://unisoncollegeni.org.uk> and over 300 people have signed up in the first two weeks. We intend that this will become the main

engagement tool with members within the next 12 months. We continue to use our Education Facebook page to promote workshops and it currently has almost 1000 followers.

This year we have included some video interviews with participants to help promote the courses further. In addition, we are working to get more alignment between the branch assessments and take up of training. This is to ensure that each branch has a broad selection of reps with the range of skills and knowledge to build capacity.

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



ICTU have continued to deliver courses from the South Eastern Regional College which has provided accreditation for our 6-day Organising Stewards, Health & Safety and Union Learning Rep training. In order to offer it as an accredited course, a minimum number of participants are required. ICTU also offer a range of excellent short seminars on topics such as redundancy, pensions and disability

provided by the LRA and Equality Commission. We promote these to activists to ensure they have the most up to date information on relevant issues.

Overall we have engaged an increased number of activists on previous years and attendance from women is still very positive at around 80%. We have been working hard to reduce the number of no shows on the day and hope that the education app will help to remind people of their booking and offer an easy way of cancelling if they are no longer able to attend.

We carried out two online surveys, one for activists and the other targeting members to better inform our learning offer. We received over 1000 replies and respondents told us they wanted more courses outside Belfast and in the evenings.

As a way of meeting that request without considerable expense, we formed a partnership with Ascertainment who deliver a range of drug and alcohol workshops across NI. Over 100 members attended but many of the sessions in rural areas did not recruit. We will continue to look at other partnership opportunities to increase our learning offer outside Belfast including working with the local Recovery Colleges.

The Organising Steward: We have trained 64 new stewards who have completed both module 1 & 2 for ERA accreditation. This is a 20% increase on the previous year. There has been a good follow through onto the grievance and disciplinaries course (34 student places, compared to 18 last year) which will help ensure that all new stewards have the confidence to support members locally with representation within the first six months of being elected.

In total 119 members (76% women) attended general stewards and representation courses during 2018/19 compared to 73 the previous year – a 63% increase. In addition to the increase on the grievance and disciplinaries course noted above, 86% more members attended the representing members at

sickness absence course (39, compared to 21 in 2018), and 78% more attended the representing members in bullying cases course (16, compared to 9 in 2018).

Negotiation, campaigning and equality: In total, 131 members (73% women) attended 7 courses designed to equip our activists on the use of equality tools in the area of negotiating and campaigning. We also introduced a new workshop, 'Defending Public Services' which supported campaigning and using equality mechanisms to achieve change. 23 members attended this course across 2 sessions.

84% more members attended the negotiating skills course this year (35, compared to 19 in 2018). 19 members also attended the Understanding Islam course – a 46% increase on 2018.

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

Health & safety: The number of health and safety trained stewards continues to grow and offers branches additional facility time to act on behalf of members. 48 reps attended the health & safety module 1 course (41% more than the 34 reps attending last year) with a further 38 reps returning for module 2.

There was a large increase in numbers attending health, safety and wellbeing courses – up from 124 members on 2017/18 to 203 this year – a 64% increase. We still regard it as important to offer activist-only sessions to enable participants to have the freedom to reflect on cases they have dealt with.

Courses that proved particularly popular included dealing with bullying at work (17 members, compared to 8 last year); dealing with stress (82 members, compared to 45 last year) and foundations for personal resilience (30 members, compared to 17 last year). A new course on supporting staff with depression attracted 10 members.

Branch officer training: We again ran a range of courses targeted at branch officers, not only supporting specific roles but also branch finance and governance. We also ran a successful session for branch officers on using social media within their branch. In 2020 regional organising staff will be working more closely with branches to identify the particular training needs of elected reps and officers. It is evident, for example, that many Treasurers have not yet undertaken mandatory training in core areas such as Finance and the organised branch, whilst those that have will be required to attend again due to recent updates in financial rules and procedures.

It is also clear from the member and activist staff survey that bespoke training may also be required to build the capacity and confidence of reps to undertake core union-building activities such as recruitment.



Development education for women activists: 96 women activists and members participated in our women's development programme. Pathways continues to be a key route for new and aspiring women activists to develop knowledge, skills and confidence. Women's Health & History has attracted a good mix of members from both health and education. A priority in 2020 will be to expand this part of the programme.

Partnering with self-organised groups: We jointly hosted a number of workshops in partnership with our Self Organising Groups. We are continuing to work with the Black & Migrant Workers group on a fast track nursing programme for overseas nurses and the refugee doctors' initiative.

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



In partnership with branches, we again offered bespoke interview skills for occupational groups linked to recruitment processes. We hosted very successful sessions for catering staff in Craigavon and Daisy Hill hospital who were applying for permanent posts and the feedback and outcomes were very positive. In addition we ran a number of sessions for classroom assistants on an ad hoc requested basis.

We also offered Interview Skills for the Open University Nursing Programme in each Trust area which engaged 85 members, many of whom successfully gained a place on the course. We also have an expression of interest list for those who wish to apply so they don't miss out on the opportunity. This is particularly important for community based staff as well as those who may not see Trust email communications.

Union Learning Fund: During the year UNISON continued to deliver successfully on the Union Learning Fund outcomes, surpassing many of the targets. We received £35,000 and this supports key areas of the member learning programme including Open University provision and IELTS/OET classes.

In response to changes with the Department for the Economy parameters, all of their funding has to be used for accredited programmes. In addition to directly funding courses, it acts as leverage to secure external funding. Over the past 12 months we have supported members to access over £90,000 worth of education grants and £25,000 in employer match funding.

Essential skills: Essential skills programmes have continued in the Western, Northern, South Eastern and Belfast Trusts with 115 students participating. Some of these have been bespoke English and Maths courses and others have been embedded into QCR qualifications. We have promoted Essential Skills widely and directed members to their local colleges. The numeracy courses have proved popular particularly by those who wish to apply for the pre-reg nursing programme.

Open University: The K101 Introduction to Health & Social Care module continues to offer our members a real opportunity to progress into new roles. 119 people from all Trusts completed the OU K101 Introduction to Health & Social Care in August 2019 with a further increase in applications this year.

2020 offers additional pathways with the Open University into new nursing branches of learning disability and children's as well as the potential new route into social work. This continues to give us the highest retention and pass rate in the UK. Some of the learners secured places on the pre-reg nursing programme which commenced in October. Others are continuing study with the Open University working towards degree programmes or to gain sufficient credits to apply to QUB or UU.

The course is £1008 and while a number of people qualified for the Student Finance grant, we had to turn down about 60 people as there was insufficient funding to support everyone. There is still a very positive uptake on the

programme from lower banded staff with 85% identifying as bands 1-3.

Bursaries: UNISON offers a range of bursaries for study towards trade union studies, women's studies, GCSEs, vocational courses and Open University. We have been actively promoting this opportunity and it has resulted in an increased number of applications from our region.

HSC Trust partnerships: In each Trust, local UNISON reps are involved in education/learning groups. The nature of these does vary from Trust to Trust and UNISON has a number of seats on each one. These partnership are serviced by local branch reps. There have been a number of initiatives via the partnerships on promoting BICS training, Food Hygiene level 2 and extending training opportunities to home care staff. The focus of these partnerships is widening participation and developing new pathways for staff to progress.



In addition, UNISON was represented on a new pilot project to develop a Masters in Nursing programme for new graduates. This commenced in September with 30 recruits across the five Trusts. 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 10: UNISON College trade union education by course and main topic, 1 Oct 2018 to 30 Sept 2019

Course	No. of Sessions	No of Student Places		
		Total	M	F
STEWARDS INDUCTION TRAINING				
The Organising Steward (Module 1)	5	64	29	35
The Organising Steward (Module 2)	5	63	24	39
Total	10	127	53	74
<i>2017/18</i>	8	98	28	70
STEWARDS & REPRESENTATION				
Introduction to grievance & disciplinaries	3	34	8	26
Representing members at sickness absence	3	39	11	28
Representing members in bullying cases	2	16	2	14
Employment law – General	2	14	4	10
Writing statements for NMC	1	7	1	6
ICTU – LRA & ECNI seminars	8	9	3	6
Total	19	119	29	90
<i>2017/18</i>	9	73	21	62
NEGOTIATING AND CAMPAIGNING				
Negotiating Skills	4	35	7	28
Agitating for political change/The Assembly	1	6	2	4
Defending Public Services	2	23	8	15
Total	7	64	17	47
<i>2017/18</i>	4	56	19	37
EQUALITY TRAINING				
Employment law – anti discrimination	1	9	3	6
Understanding power & challenging sectarianism	1	7	1	6
Intro to Equality/Understanding Islam	1	19	5	14
Transgender awareness & activism	2	32	9	23
Total	5	67	18	49
<i>2017/18</i>	7	102	30	72
HEALTH & SAFETY - REPS				
Health & Safety module 1	4	48	19	29
Health & Safety module 2	3	38	13	25
Total	7	86	32	54
<i>2017/18</i>	6	68	14	54
HEALTH & SAFETY & WELLBEING				
Dealing with bullying at work	2	17	2	15
Dealing with stress	6	82	16	66
Suicide awareness training	1	17	3	14
Mental health first aid	2	27	6	21
Mental health first aid for activists	1	11	1	10
Suicide awareness for activists	1	9	4	5
Foundations of personal resilience	3	30	4	26
Supporting staff with depression	1	10	2	8
Total	17	203	38	165
<i>2017/18</i>	11	124	21	103

Course	No. of Sessions	No of Student Places		
		Total	M	F
BRANCH OFFICER TRAINING				
Branch welfare officers	1	9	3	6
Branch Treasurer OLBA training	1	9	0	9
Finance & the organised branch	1	7	1	6
Union Learning Reps via ICTU	1	3	1	2
Promoting education in your branch	1	10	3	7
Using social media in your branch	1	11	3	8
The Effective Chairperson	1	5	1	4
Total	7	54	12	42
2017/18	8	73	15	58
DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION FOR WOMEN				
Building Confidence for women	4	35	0	35
Women's health & history	2	45	0	45
Pathways	1	16	0	16
Total	7	96	0	96
2017/18	9	125	0	125
BUILDING NEW LEADERS & UPDATING EXISTING LEADERS				
ERA Refresher	3	77	26	51
Communication Skills	4	53	7	46
Total	7	130	33	97
2017/18	4	37	6	31
TOTAL 2018/19	86	946	232 (24%)	714 (76%)
2017/18	64	754	153 (24%)	600 (76%)

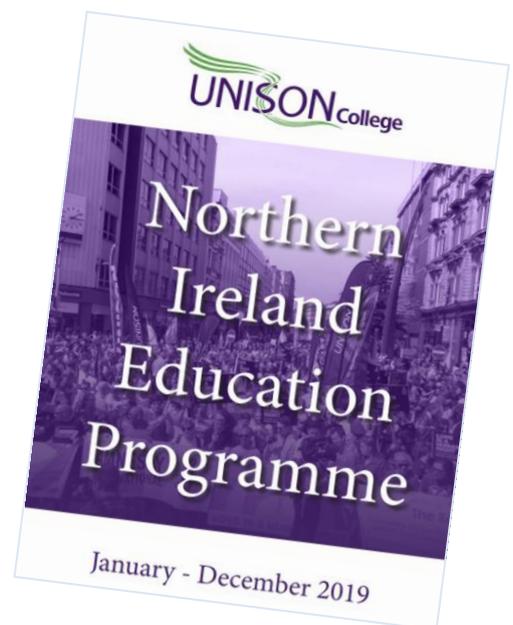


Table 11: UNISON College member courses and main topic, 1 Oct 2018 to 30 Sept 2019

Course	No. of Sessions	No of Student Places		
		Total	M	F
Protecting professional registration				
NISCC – Understanding code and keeping your practice safe	6	63	4	59
NMC Professional Accountability and Record Keeping	3	33	9	24
Nurses leading from the bedside	1	11	0	11
Supporting yourself and others				
Communication Skills	4	53	7	46
Dealing with Bereavement and Loss	1	12	4	8
I've a teenager	1	7	0	7
Managing challenging conversations	3	41	3	38
Managing your time	1	8	2	7
Presentation and Public Speaking Skills	1	5	0	5
Mindfulness	5	85	6	79
Supporting you in your job				
Addiction	10	106	28	78
Autism	6	211	35	176
Caring for acutely unwell adult	1	8	1	7
Caring for a person with gastrostomy tube	1	6	0	6
Clinical effectiveness for nurses	2	17	2	15
Delirium	1	12	0	12
Dementia	11	119	15	104
Diabetes	3	60	9	51
Dignity at the heart of health & social care	6	52	2	50
Dysphagia	1	18	2	16
Epilepsy	4	37	5	32
Learning disability	3	41	4	37
LGBT+ and Intersectionality	2	75	28	47
Managing an infection outbreak	1	15	1	14
Managing chronic fatigue	1	5	1	4
Medication Administration - The Importance of Accuracy	2	28	5	23
Medications for day care and home care workers	1	5	0	5
Palliative Care	12	129	14	115
Parkinsons	2	47	5	42
Pathobiology lecture series	5	73	17	56
Promoting Good Stoma Care	2	26	3	23
Psychological therapies (with Recovery College)	2	9	3	6
Risk assessment – an introduction	1	5	1	4
Sepsis	2	38	7	31
Schizophrenia Awareness (with Recovery College)	2	10	2	8
Therapeutic creativity with children	1	10	0	10
Wound Care	4	49	6	43
Interview skills				
Interview Skills for Health & Social Care	2	34	8	26
Interview Skills for OU Nursing	10	85	19	66
Interview Skills for School Support Staff	4	27	1	26
Interview Skills for Health Service Porters/Cleaners	3	42	17	25
Planning for Retirement				
Planning for Retirement	3	130	39	91
Total				1533
	137	1847	314 (17%)	(87%)
2017/18	70	946	127	817

There for you - Welfare services

UNISON NI Welfare Group: The Group met 3 times this year with 13 branches participating. With 31 members (75% women) the Group has successfully encouraged more branch welfare officers to attend meetings in order to share information and good practice. The Group AGM is scheduled for 25 November 2019. Margaret McKee (NEC) is the Welfare Trustee for UNISON NI and will attend the AGM.

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

Welfare Grant Payments (Jan to Dec 2018): UNISON NI members received a total of £22,147 during 2018, covering a range of assistance such as clothing and emergency grants; white goods and furniture; special payments; funeral and utility costs.

Regional Committee congratulates branch welfare officers on obtaining these vital payments/items for members in crisis.



Winter Fuel Grants: 2019: 127 members applied from 21 NI branches. A total of £4,450 was awarded.

School Uniform Grants 2019: 97 members applied from NI branches and 54 were successful. A total of £4,550 was awarded.

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

UNISON Living - Financial Services

Flyers and literature for UNISON Living is regularly ordered by the regional centre and distributed to the membership. Branches can order their own supplies.

LV visited twice this year and again donated £100 in high street vouchers. In addition to supporting branches, they supported events for nurses in June and attended the health & safety seminar. They have now launched an electric vehicle policy.

UIA have not visited this year and did not respond to requests for information on business completed in NI.

Abbey Insurance were again very active this year, attending the majority of AGM meetings, branch recruitment events and meeting with organising staff. This activity resulted in members taking advantage of 5697 motor policies, 942 home policies and 41 travel policies.

Lighthouse financial advice have hosted 13 surgeries/seminars since 2018 Regional Council. These attracted 133 attendees. They have a further 9 planned before the end of October. In addition, they had 41 individual appointments.

Lighthouse would like to thank the branches for their assistance in booking rooms and advertising the surgeries, without which they would be unable to run.

UNISON Protect have planned a visit in November. They maintain regular contact with branches who visited their exhibition stand at UNISON Conferences in 2019 and supported numerous branches with materials for 2019 AGMs. This resulted in 1001 members signing for free insurance. 254 members also signed up for the new app on the Rewards discount website.

Legal services

The following is an update report from our solicitors Thompsons to the end of August 2019 on cases and activity.



■ UNISON Personal Injury Cases From Sept 2018 to Aug 2019

Table 17 - UNISON Personal Injury Cases from Sept 2018 to Aug 2019

	2017-2018	2018-2019
Cases received	208	162
Cases closed	182	181
Cases won	102	93
Cases lost	2	1
Cases discontinued/turned down	56	71
Cases where no contact from client	22	16
Turnaround time average	18 months	13 months
Damages	£607,101	£592,758
Average Damages	£5,952	£6,373

The following are some notable outcomes:

- **£27,000 for Kitchen Assistant.** The member received damages for a fracture sustained when they slipped on a wet floor during the course of their employment with the Education Authority.
- **£28,000 for Delivery Driver.** The member sustained an ankle injury following an RTA when the bicycle they were travelling to work on was struck by a car.
- **£6,000 for Voluntary Worker.** The member sustained a needlestick injury to their right hand whilst removing contents from a bin.
- **£20,000 for Staff Nurse.** The member sustained facial injuries following an assault by a patient during the course of their employment with the Belfast Trust.
- **£30,000 for Mental Health Worker.** The member sustained serious injuries when they slipped and fell on a wet floor during the course of their employment with the Voluntary Sector.
- **£18,000 for Classroom Assistant.** The member sustained a head injury when they were struck by a heavy object which fell from the ceiling.
- **£25,000 for Staff Nurse.** The member was restraining a patient when they sustained a ruptured tendon to their left hand.
- **£4,500 for Pharmacy Technician.** The member suffered an exacerbation of a chest complaint following exposure to fumes during the course of their employment with a Health Trust.

■ Employment Rights

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

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

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

Individual Cases: A number of more complex cases including discrimination cases are referred to the ER team to provide representation at Tribunal or in court.

- *A UNISON member was on sick leave when their employment came to an end. They alleged that they were entitled to receive a payment in lieu of notice following the termination. We pursued Tribunal proceedings against their Health Trust employer and secured a settlement of the case. The member recovered over £7,500 in relation to notice pay.*



■ Extended legal services, training and events

Free wills service: Members were able to avail of the Free Wills Service. Solicitors attended a number of branch functions to advise on free wills.

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

In one very recent case of drink driving we successfully deployed a 'special reason' argument to reduce an obligatory 12 month disqualification to a mere 6 weeks. Special reasons are notoriously difficult to plead and the standard of proof is exceptionally high.

We also advised members on a number of criminal queries which did not amount to police involvement but which the member required information on such as (a) lost money on a 'pyramid scheme'; and (b) 'child protection issues' and (c) publication of alleged offences in the media.

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

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

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



Negotiating and bargaining on behalf of members, and promoting equality

Our bargaining sectors

We are in our third challenging year with the collapse of devolution, absence of Ministers, cuts in budgets, decline and withdrawal of services and impact on the workforce, all converging to maintain a substantial level of uncertainty. A critical example of the impact has been the delay in completing Agenda for Change Refresh across the HSC.

Balloting commences on October 21st of all directly employed health staff in Trusts and 'arms length' bodies. We can no longer accept that the absence of devolved power sharing can continue or restrict movement on pay terms and conditions for our HSC members.

Parallel to this campaign, we have commenced negotiations with the Department and all Trusts to significantly reduce and eventually end the huge expenditure on agency cover. This is a substantial part of our work to reinstate safe staffing levels based on a sustainable and stable permanent workforce.



UNISON health workers take their call to end the NHS pay deficit to the UK Treasury and Parliament.

We continue to challenge the behaviour of the Department of Health which is driving forward *Delivering Together* by ignoring the commitment to co-design and co-delivery.

Strategic and policy discussions continue to take place which have transformational impact on health services ignoring the fact that transformation only succeeds with the co-operation of staff. Monitoring developments and ensuring accountability and transparency has significantly increased the workload of UNISON staff and activists.

We now know that within domiciliary care there is a privatisation agenda under consideration in the Department. Our bargaining, public policy and campaign strategies are interlinked and require us to challenge all of this at Government, public body and individual employer levels.

Our key priority in 2019 continues to be one of responding to significant developments in the health, education, community and voluntary sectors. All of this is taking place in the absence of Government. Internally we have realigned to ensure local and regional negotiating bodies reflect UNISON's bargaining priorities, including:

- bargaining for recognition agreements;
- pay campaigns in health, education, community and voluntary, and private sectors;
- equality bargaining with all employers – with a priority on voluntary gender pay gap reporting in the absence of regulations;
- challenging privatisation across all sectors and highlighting home care;
- pursuing up-banding for Trust care staff;
- pursuing the demand for a real living wage across all sectors;
- challenging cuts to government funding to the community and voluntary sector by applying S75 to cuts;
- continuing to challenge the reduction in the pay of special needs staff by changing contracts;
- assessing the impact of EU Exit on the workforce and services;
- demanding resources for workforce planning and career pathways;
- pursuing ethical procurement, including the supply chain, in health and education;
- challenging the Education Authority on their failure to auto-enrol at the appropriate date thousands of workers in the NILGOSC pension scheme;
- continuing participation in the new pension schemes governance bodies (both NILGOSC and HSC) and securing ongoing training for new lay trustees and pension board members.

■ Challenging privatisation in health and education

Keeping support services in-house: In patient and client support services, we are in negotiations with the Belfast and Western Trusts to identify and agree service needs and staffing levels. We are insisting on eradication of any attempts to introduce or maintain agency working. We are also seeking permanent posts for temporary workers in these services.

Protecting social care: Over the past year UNISON has been involved in engagement at the policy level and at the bargaining tables across the Trusts on the drive towards a new model of domiciliary care. The policy issues we are challenging on are covered in Section 3 of the report. Our work at Trust level includes:

- engagement with procurement officers on the monitoring of outsourced provision;
- raising concerns about the use of zero hour contracts, agency and temporary staff.



Ethical care demo at Strabane District Caring, Oct 2019

In the South Eastern Trust we have reached an agreement which can act as a template across all Trusts:

- securing a domiciliary care service contract and service specification;
- agreement at quarterly meetings to monitor and review service provision across the independent sector;

- discussion on Trust support for our recognition campaign across the independent sector;
- consideration of a partnership project on training and education;
- close co-operation on supporting the whistle-blowing policy.

On the in-house side, we have forced all Trusts to maintain the direct workforce at current levels with a view to restoring in-house delivery. Where permanent posts in direct provision are available, UNISON supports the movement of staff from the independent sector into these jobs.

Private medicine: We continue to challenge the increased use of private medicine and have now raised our concern at the extension of contracts with private sector care providers into the field of mental health and on the use of agencies and locums which is draining resources from the service.

Education: We have opened discussions with the Department of Education on Transformation. A new oversight committee has been established in response to our demand, and trade union seats on that committee are agreed. We remain on full alert as privatisation is a very real threat in education and the EA budget deficit has widened. In 2019, our challenge to voluntary grammar schools withdrawing from EA support services has started to slow down the process.

■ Pay campaigns in health & education

Health - Agenda for Change: A pay uplift was imposed in late December 2018. This led to serious shortfalls in pension contributions which had to be recouped from members' retrospective pay. Despite resistance from the Department, Trust employers have agreed to commence discussions on the removal of band 1 to secure a living wage.

Education and Local Government: We secured the 2 year NJC pay agreement and completed

2nd year band adjustments. Unlike health, the Department of Education acknowledges this as contractual and not a matter for Ministers. Some issues on pay differentials have yet to be resolved. An internal pay and grading review might resolve this. A new NJC pay claim for £10 or 10% has been lodged. Negotiations are just starting. UNISON aims to ensure that all workers rise to, or above, the living wage threshold.

■ Developing recognition and bargaining sectors

We are the lead union in health and social care bargaining and the joint lead in education. The range of formal NI-wide bargaining structures covers the majority of our membership in health, social care, education and higher education. We also have a range of bargaining structures with individual employers but significant sectors still without recognition or central bargaining.



As part of the current Review of democratic participation, we are analysing more than 900 employers in the private sector, the public sector (outside health & education), the community sector and the voluntary sector to determine more effective strategies to secure both recognition and bargaining rights. This work is being overseen by the Democratic Participation Review Group in conjunction with Regional Committee, service groups and branches. It will lead to reconfiguration at both branch and regional level.

Bargaining for recognition agreements: We are about to commence formal application to the Industrial Court where we have the density but employer resistance. This will include ArjoHuntleigh, the largest private homecare

employers and a number of the housing associations. We are exerting pressure on the health service in particular to include trade union recognition as a criterion in the award of contracts. However, given that formal recognition flows from having the proper membership density, it is a priority for all branches to maximise recruitment in these areas in 2019/2020. This will be closely monitored by the service groups and Regional Committee.

Strengthening our bargaining structures inside the union and at employer level: Co-ordination of our employer based and region-wide bargaining teams has significantly improved. Bargainers from both the staff teams and lay teams have faced an increased workload and much of our bargaining capacity has been maintained by their willingness to provide cover for each other.

A service group review of some of the existing sub-structures has resulted in us standing down the social care forum in favour of the homecare steering group. A new initiative, the 'Nurses Forum Roadshow' has been launched with Nurse Forum officers leading events at branch level. This initiative has replaced Forum meetings for 2019. A review will take place at year end to discuss and consider how the Forum operates in 2020.

Representation NMC, NISCC hearings and Professional Conduct Hearings: Following the agreement of a new HQ protocol for the oversight of our NMC casework, we continue to use our small panel of external experts in co-ordination with the HQ unit.

Bargaining for equality

As can be seen from the education report, we have been matching our central bargaining demands on equality with increased training for our own representatives. Our self-organised groups have also played an important role in bringing equality demands through the structures and to the bargaining table. These

include the work of our Women's Committee on Menopause, childcare, and pay and conditions inequality. We have also been informed by the work of our Black and Migrant Workers Group on the impact of EU Exit and by our Disability Group and LGBT+ Forum on key areas of workplace inequality.

We note that the Disability Group is requiring assessment of all public sector disability schemes and this will engage the UNISON bargaining team.

The absence of a Government has delayed the introduction of regulations on gender pay auditing and on zero-hours contracts. We have moved ahead with these as bargaining demands.

In health, we have succeeded in up-banding a large number of workers, particularly women, in sex segregated jobs such as homecare. This is an ongoing challenge.

Our members in all sectors also face adverse impact as a result of lack of childcare provision and its cost of where it does exist. We continue to alert the health service in particular of the fact that workers lose child care vouchers as they move across jobs, Departments and Trusts. This is a threat which the EA has been made aware of. We support the ICTU report on childcare in NI and have now placed this on the bargaining agenda.

Our review of the operation of joint agreements on handling domestic violence and abuse continues. All UNISON negotiators are mandated to insist that all change management proposals are subject to

Section 75 of the NI Act and are scrutinised using EQIAs.

We have successfully re-instated reporting on equality issues on to the health and social care central bargaining agenda with reports from all employers. There are still gaps in the information provided and we have sought further information.

In education, we publicly challenged an attempt by homophobes on the EA Board to obstruct LGBT+ support resources for EA staff. This issue is not yet resolved.

Our members again presented to the Low Pay Commission during its 2019 visit. We highlighted low pay across all sectors of our membership. Members presented personal testimonies and the event was captured in a UNISON video shared on social media.



The Impact of EU Exit on the workforce

The implications of EU Exit has dominated much of our work throughout the year. In the Departments of Health and Education, civil servants previously involved in service discussions with us have been redeployed to work on impact assessments in the event of a no-deal. As outlined in Section 3 of this report we continue to engage in a range of activity aimed at protecting workers rights that are at risk through exiting the EU.

It has been agreed by employers, political parties and wider civil society that NI will be very exposed by EU Exit due to a loss of migrant workers. The only official NI Executive position highlighted that both our

public and private sectors are 'highly dependent' on accessing EU migrant workers.



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

The loss of EU funding for cross-border health services, which have developed over the last 20 years now puts jobs and services under threat into the future. Cross NI Departmental advice to workers has been issued on all websites. Following UNISON intervention, a fee for the EU Resettlement Scheme has been withdrawn. Other details relating to driving permits and insurance have been released. We continue to closely monitor developments.

Education Authority and related employers

As with all other services, education is suffering from the democratic deficit caused by the collapse of devolution and the absence of a Minister. There is currently great disquiet across all sections of the workforce with teachers and head teachers in particular balloting for industrial action.

UNISON is the largest union for support workers and the Head of Bargaining leads the UNISON team at the Education Joint Negotiating Council. The current £100m+ deficit in the education budget is impacting on the EA workforce at HQ and school levels. Budget cuts are now causing real difficulties.



Current issues under negotiation include the following.

- There is an ongoing EA review of contractual issues for classroom assistants.
- The database on temporary workforce numbers and also workers impacted by EU Exit across the EA has still not been published.
- Negotiations continue on school transport re-configuration.

- The DoE led review of the school meals service has raised issues for school catering staff. Our emphasis is on restoring the nutritional meals service which was piloted by the first Education Minister as a result of UNISON intervention. The review includes increasing the take-up of school meals. The EA has taken some initiatives at the start of the 2019 school year to increase uptake of school meals.
- We continue to negotiate on the impact of school mergers, amalgamations and closures on existing staff and protection of TUPE rights.
- We are also supporting our members in the C&V sector delivering youth services.
- The 2022 NJC pay claim has been published.
- We are currently negotiating pay protection for all workers redeployed as a result of the new EA structures.
- We have served a claim on the voluntary grammar schools where we have members seeking application of the 2018/2020 NJC pay award. We have membership in less than 50% of the schools and this sector's employers are very resistant to engagement with UNISON.

We ran a specific job evaluation briefing led by lay members for organisers and senior lay members on how to use the current job evaluation schemes in use in the Education Authority.

Further & Higher Education, Libraries & Youth Justice

■ Non-Teaching Staffs Negotiating Council (NTSNC)

Budget cuts to this sector are even more acute in 2019 and there are genuine fears for the future of some of our colleges. The direct membership of all unions has shrunk as a result of the privatisation of support services. In higher education, libraries and youth justice we are part of regional negotiations.

The NTSNC have established a new sub-group on pay, on a two phase approach to implement NJC pay scales. Phase 1 is the assimilation of staff into the new pay spine and Phase 2 is a grade review, to commence March 2020. Year 2 of the new pay scale was effective from 1 April 2019. Two policies under review have still to be ratified - Work from Home and Learning and Development.

Regional Bargaining: In 2018-2019 the non-teaching bargaining structures negotiations established regional pay. Employers acceptance of the NJC pay award for direct employers has been paid, Phase 2 which included re-alignment of pay scales is currently under discussions. We have served a comparable pay claim for our outsourced members employed by a number of contractors including Noonans, Grahams and Mount Charles.

Meanwhile, we retain membership in the privatised services and will lodge a claim similar to the NJC pay award with the contractor companies.

■ Higher Education

Universities outsourced staff: UNISON scored a recent success with the receptionists who were employed by Noonan and are now going to be brought back in house, on University terms and conditions. We now have a regular meetings on both the Jordanstown and Coleraine campuses.

University staff directly employed: Direct staff have had issues with redundancy and are currently being balloted in a UK wide ballot on strike action in a pay dispute. Planned restructuring in the Sports Complex has been put on hold and a plan to outsource the catering service has been shelved.

■ The NI Library Authority

As a result of the 2019/2020 budget there is a further overall cut in the allocation to libraries. While an additional £2.3 million has been made available for stock, £500k for staffing, £200k for maintenance and £150k for utilities, we still face the prospect of cuts and redundancies.

The Authority is currently working on organisational restructuring and we await proposals. We understand that a corporate plan for 2020-2024 has been completed by the Board but have yet to be presented to unions.

The NJC pay award has been accepted by the Authority. Year 1 has been implemented and

year 2 is under discussion. Work is ongoing on reducing spinal points and assimilation for staff on these new points (as happened in the EA).



There are some 60 – 70 agency workers employed and there are plans to reduce the reliance on agency. 15 staff have been made permanent from April 2019.

■ Youth Justice Agency

Members in the Youth Justice Centres were TUPE transferred into the civil service structures and are now on civil service pay terms and conditions. The recent 2019 imposition of 1.25% is currently being

challenged. We retain our membership and have a seat at local bargaining structures but are excluded from regional bargaining civil service forums.

Health and social services bargaining

We continue to be constrained by the absence of Government. The NI (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018 extends certain powers of the civil service requiring us to be increasingly vigilant given the lack of transparency and openness in decision-making.

In health, pay bargaining the Department is playing an enhanced role. We have commenced Agenda for Change Refresher training to ensure our shop stewards are fully compliant and enforcing payment at the local bargaining table. We continue to maximise Agenda for Change and have increased pay-outs to the members which last year we reported as the largest in the UK.

We continue to challenge the Business Services Organisation on issues such as getting our members' pay right and delays in the selection and recruitment procedures. In the NI Ambulance Service we have hit crisis point several times as a result of more than 300 vacancies. Our senior lay reps participated in working groups covering job roles, training and service delivery.

NIAS itself has developed a set of proposals on how this might be achieved including increasing the numbers of posts. An outstanding grievance on the JE process has advanced to Departmental level. An initial funding proposal from the Department in its present form does not resolve the issues. However, branch and regional negotiators are attempting to secure expansion and enhancement of these in order to finally resolve this long standing issue.

In addition, as reported in Section 3, the UNISON-led partnership with NIAS is highlighting much of the change required to improve the health and well-being of staff.



The implementation of the decision to close the Health and Social Care Board and transfer services substantially to the Public Health Agency has been stalled as a result of no Government. A Board closure forum has been established and UNISON has seats. A number of review groups have been established to assess and plan the transition for the services affected. However, these review groups are not meeting with any frequency. Any developments are led by the DoH and the BSO and speculation suggests that closure won't be affected until at least 2021.

NHS Pensions: We note the update on the legal judgment that found elements of the fire-fighters and judges pension schemes to be discriminatory based on age.

There is a likely read across of this judgment to the other public sector pension schemes, which includes the NHS Pension Scheme, that have similar protection arrangements.

In a Ministerial written statement, the Government stated its belief that the difference in treatment provided by the transitional arrangements will need to be remedied across all public sector pension schemes including the NHS. UNISON is currently working with the other NHS trade unions, employers and government departments to understand the applicability and implications this judgment has for the NHS Pension Scheme.

Private Sector

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

The **Four Seasons** 2019 pay offer was accepted and included a graduated range of pay rises and reimbursement for the cost of

registration and renewal with professional bodies.

Our request for a recognition with **NI Women's Aid Federation** was rejected and we are now pursuing joint recognition. Despite this, we successfully TUPE'd members to their new employer **NEXUS**. We are nearing agreement with **Apex Housing** in Derry on official recognition.

Earlier this year our members in **Kilmorey Care** rejected a pay offer. Following further negotiations, an improved offer is currently out to ballot.

Community and Voluntary Sectors

The hundreds of very diverse members and employments across these sectors require intensive input to deal with lodging of pay claims, other negotiations, grievances and disciplinaries and in many cases the battle for recognition.

In the course of the year the UNISON staff team, in tandem with some members of the C&V branch and other UNISON activists, have taken on board the task of ensuring that these members get equality of treatment. This is a growing challenge and one for which we may find new solutions in the Stage 2 Review of democratic participation.

Campaigns involving our members and many NGOs have been fully supported, including the campaigns led by women's organisations, those challenging the impact of welfare cuts,

those challenging the roll-back on equality and human rights and particular challenges on current policy such as cuts to the Supporting People Programme.



Pay freezes are widespread given the cuts to a wide range of programmes. Where we have lodged pay claims, we still await responses.



Campaigning and promoting UNISON on behalf of members

WHY CAMPAIGN?

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

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

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

All of our work in this section is about advancing the position of our members, their families and their communities. It is led by Regional Secretary, Patricia McKeown on behalf of the Regional Committee and supported by RMT members, Thomas Mahaffy and Anne Speed. The main policy work is carried out by John Patrick Clayton.

Current political context

We now have had no Executive or Assembly in place for 1000 days. The failure to restore devolved Government is largely due to the absence of political will to embed equality and human rights commitments as a framework for Government.

UNISON has continued to actively campaign throughout the last 12 months for a return to genuine power-sharing, but we are clear that this must be on the basis of implementing human rights and equality for all. We have made this case strongly to all political parties, the British and Irish Governments and US political representatives.

Previous attempts to restore devolved Government have been complicated by the

DUP-Conservative Confidence and Supply Agreement, which gave the DUP major influence over the future of Theresa May's Government.



However, it remains to be seen how strong the DUP influence at Westminster will be now that Boris Johnson has no majority in Parliament, even with the DUP's support.

We are preparing for an imminent general election and will hold our local parties to account on the major issues affecting our members, their families and our communities.

The lack of devolved Government has still not led to the UK Government moving to formally reinstate Direct Rule from Westminster, limiting their intervention thus far to passing budgets for NI. However, Direct Rule as a result of a 'no deal' withdrawal from the EU is a real possibility. We continue to press for a return of the power-sharing institutions, as Direct Rule by a Tory Government continuing to impose austerity policies would be calamitous.

We have supported the limited interventions that Parliament has made to legislate for equal marriage and the right to choose in NI, addressing longstanding rights deficits that our local political parties had shown themselves incapable of resolving. In the absence of devolved Government in NI delivering on the rights of the people, we will continue to press political parties at Westminster, particularly the Labour party, to deliver on the rights-based framework promised under the Peace Agreements.

The absence of Government and the relevant Ministers is adversely impacting on our members, their jobs and pay, and on service delivery. Legislation passed through Westminster (the NI Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions Act, 2018) permits senior civil servants to take decisions in the absence of Ministers where they are satisfied it is in the public interest.

We have scrutinised and challenged civil servants over their use of these powers, particularly in health and social care, in order to ensure that we do not see them being used to impose major service changes without proper consultation with UNISON members, service users and the wider public and without democratic oversight and accountability.

The campaign to restore devolution remains a UNISON NI priority for 2020, and we will continue to press for a rights-based return to genuine power-sharing.

The shadow of an impending exit from the EU continues to hang over us. We now have a UK Government led by Boris Johnson which is showing a complete disregard for its responsibilities as a co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement by demanding that the UK exits the EU 'do or die' by 31st October.

Recognising that a 'no deal' exit from the EU represents the gravest threat to peace in NI since the Agreement was reached in 1998, we have formed a unique alliance with business organisations and wider civic society to both publically campaign against a 'no deal' exit and to call on US politicians to ensure that any future US-UK trade deal does not compromise the Good Friday Agreement.



Countering the potential negative impacts that exiting the EU will have on our members in NI, their families, communities and the wider peace process will remain a key priority, regardless of whatever developments occur over the coming weeks.

In conjunction with ICTU and alongside our allies in the rights and equality sector in NI, we successfully worked to influence local political parties, the Irish Government, and the EU in order to ensure that protection of the Good Friday Agreement was a priority issue within the exit negotiations. Protecting the particular circumstances of NI and the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts must remain of paramount importance.

Regardless of the dysfunctional nature of our politics, the UNISON Agenda remains largely unchanged. However, given that so many of our demands require a functioning Government and political will, progress has been stalled.

In health and social care, we continue to demand that ‘transformation’ not be used as a byword for cuts to services like stroke and breast assessment, and that real and genuine efforts are made to address systemic health inequalities.

We are growing increasingly frustrated by the lack of progress in developing and implementing the policies needed to end exploitation of workers in social care and the short-changing of service users. We will be shortly launching our campaign to ensure that homecare is delivered on an ethical basis.

In education, we continue to strongly challenge the kind of arbitrary decisions that can be taken by a Government Department or a public body in the absence of a Minister and Parliamentary oversight, and without regard to our equality duty. The significant funding crisis facing our services continues to compromise services, particularly for the most vulnerable children.

Across the public service, budgets are in severe difficulty and ultimately it is our members and the public that will bear the harshest impact. For this reason, we continue to press all parties to take responsibility. We continue to press for a strong focus on promoting and protecting our members’ rights.

Our priorities with Government and employers continue to be for:

- a real Living Wage for all and pay parity for NHS workers in NI;
- building on the powers in our new employment legislation to abolish zero-hours contracts;
- mainstreaming equality and human rights into public sector procurement and employment processes;
- gaining access for our members to adequate, affordable childcare and agreements to protect women’s health;
- challenging poverty and inequality; and
- providing our members with support to access existing entitlement to the benefits system while at the same time reversing the discriminatory changes now in place.



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

■ The impact of exiting the EU

The impact of EU exit will be felt throughout the membership. The work needed to secure protection for the Peace Agreement and our members' rights and livelihoods is extensive. Consequently throughout the past year members of the UNISON NI team have:

- liaised closely with the General Secretary and the HQ team;
- produced extensive impact analyses;
- campaigned in the EU elections;
- secured resolutions at NDC and ICTU;
- engaged with the UK and Irish Governments, the EU institutions, UK political parties, all local political parties, US political representatives and sought clear commitments from the British Labour Party;

- sponsored and participated in special conferences and seminars;
- worked closely with our allies in ICTU and the equality and human rights sector.

The new UK Government led by Boris Johnson continues to assert that the UK will leave the EU on 31st October, with or without a deal, a line he is sticking to even in the face of Parliament legislating to prevent a crash-out. For that reason, the chance of a ‘no deal’ exit under this Government remains substantial and represents the most serious threat to the Peace Process since the Agreement was reached in 1998.

The Prime Minister has talked up the removal of the ‘backstop’, in order to strike a deal with the EU thus disregarding the fact that the backstop is the only legally-binding and substantive means to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland and protect the Good Friday Agreement.

The protection of the Good Friday Agreement is a UNISON priority. A no deal Brexit means no backstop, completely undermining the Agreement. The backstop represents the bare minimum needed to protect our economy, our rights and our peace process.

Throughout our campaign activity, we have consistently called for:

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

We have also been at the forefront of the wider trade union campaign across the island of Ireland aimed at ensuring that workers do not pay the price of exiting the EU. We have led on the development of the ICTU response to the EU exit negotiations through the development of three policy position papers (i) Brexit – The key issues, Winter 2016, (ii) Brexit – Time to rethink the key issues - July 2017, and (iii) the implications of a no-deal Brexit, Spring 2019. These have ensured that the protection of the Peace Process is a key campaigning priority for the trade union movement across the island.

UNISON does not support the deal Theresa May negotiated with the EU, but as a result of our efforts supports the ‘backstop’ and recognises that any agreement between the EU and UK will not be possible unless there is such an arrangement designed to protect the Good Friday Agreement, North-South cooperation and the all island economy on the island of Ireland. In a February article in the New Statesman, the General Secretary stated clearly that our members in NI need the insurance policy of the backstop.



In May, we published the UNISON NI European Parliamentary election manifesto, representing the key concerns of our members in relation to the UK exit from the EU.

Protecting the economy: A key concern throughout has been the impact that exiting the EU will have on the economy, with the potential that a weakened economy will result in lower tax revenues and a subsequent decline in resources for public services which have already suffered from sustained austerity.

As ICTU has warned, if the UK leaves the EU without a deal, goods from NI will face major barriers to trade with both the Republic of Ireland and the rest of the EU. Exiting the Single Market means that many goods produced in NI and exported into the EU will no longer be recognised as conforming to EU standards and regulations, presenting a non-tariff barrier to trade.

Exiting the Customs Union will mean that NI exports will be liable for tariffs at current

World Trade Organisation Most-Favoured Nation (MFN) rates on a range of products. Dairy products for example account for around 10% of all NI's EU exports and could face an average tariff of almost 36% trading into the EU. In an environment of increasing costs, businesses may seek to cut jobs and for consumers prices will rise. Those businesses that operate and trade most on a cross-border basis will be most exposed, particularly in a 'no deal' scenario.

The 'backstop' within the Withdrawal Agreement seeks to avoid these devastating outcomes through aligning NI with the EU Single Market in relation to goods, and keeping the whole of the UK within a single customs territory with the EU. For these reasons, we have called on all local political parties to support the provisions of the backstop with regards to the Single Market and Customs Union.

Protecting rights: Securing protections for the rights of our members, their families and the wider community has been a key priority for us from the outset. 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 European level.

EU law underpins a range of key workers' rights and obligations placed on employers. These cover areas including employment rights, equality, and health and safety laws. Outside of the EU, future Governments could try to remove key rights and obligations currently required by EU membership. The UK will no longer be required to keep pace with rights at EU level.



The current backstop arrangements contain some limited protections for rights and equality, protections which we would expect

to see significantly strengthened as part of any agreement on a future relationship between the EU and UK. It commits to "non-diminution" of anti-discrimination laws based on EU law that the negotiators linked to the Good Friday Agreement to be implemented through "dedicated mechanisms". It is not yet clear what this mechanism will mean in practice and clarity is urgently needed in this regard.

The "single customs territory" provided for within the backstop between the UK and EU, designed to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland, is accompanied by a commitment by the UK not to allow workers' rights and health and safety laws to fall below the common standard shared by the EU and UK at the end of the transition period.



Whilst this provides a floor for the whole UK in relation to these areas this is only limited protection and represents the absolute minimum acceptable to protect our members. In a 'no deal' exit from the EU, even these limited protections will not apply.

We have demanded that all political parties give unequivocal commitments that will oppose any attempts to dismantle rights and protections and support the backstop provisions on rights as the minimum level of protection required and resist any attempts to remove or weaken the backstop.

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

Protecting the Good Friday Agreement and the Peace Process: This has been central to all our policy and campaigning work. In our

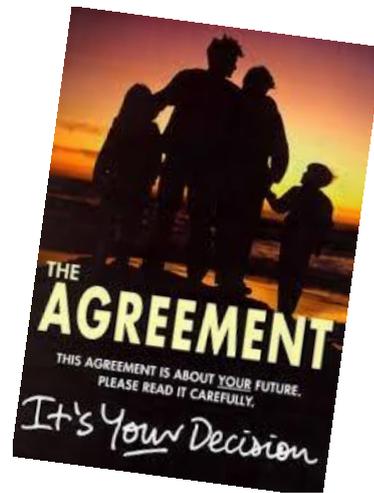
motions to both UNISON NDC and ICTU BDC this year, we successfully called for both UNISON NEC and ICTU to ensure that the protection of the Peace Process remains a priority. It seems highly unlikely that any agreement between the EU and UK will be possible unless a 'backstop' that recognises the particular circumstance of NI and protects the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) in all its parts is included.

The process of exiting the EU impacts on the GFA and has already damaged the operation of devolution with a lack of political consensus on the issues inhibiting the return of power-sharing. The potential for a UK exit from the EU to further undermine and weaken the GFA can be seen across a number of its provisions. This includes the negative impact it will have on securing equivalence of rights between both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland and the undermining of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Whilst the backstop is limited in several aspects with regards to the protection of the provisions of the GFA, it represents the minimum level of protection required to mitigate the impacts of exiting the EU. It is vital that its provisions be secured and then built upon within negotiations on the future relationship between the EU and UK.

In the event of a 'no-deal', there will be no backstop arrangements in place to protect the Good Friday Agreement. A no-deal exit will inevitably lead to a hard border comprising of border infrastructure, checks and controls which will significantly disrupt the day-to-day lives of workers, their families and their communities and which may cause political and social tensions, including the potential for attacks by paramilitary groups.

A core principle of the GFA is equality of citizenship. The Agreement recognises that it is the birthright of people born in NI to identify as Irish, or British, or both and accordingly hold British or Irish citizenship or both. This provides for equal treatment between British and Irish citizens. Exiting the EU undermines this principle.



British citizens in NI will have fewer rights and entitlements than Irish citizens by the fact that Irish citizens will retain EU rights and British citizens will lose them. At the same time, Irish citizens in NI will not enjoy the full range of EU citizenship rights.

UNISON is opposed to both a border in the Irish sea and the removal of the open border across the island of Ireland. We remain fully supportive of the principle of consent enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement in terms of the constitutional position of NI.

We are demanding from all parties to the negotiations that the backstop remains in place and that legislation is passed in both the UK and Ireland that fully recognises the principle of equality of citizenship under the Good Friday Agreement. We will resist any attempt to weaken the backstop, such as by imposing a time-limit to it.

Protecting the Common Travel Area: Free movement of people as a right under EU law is of critical importance to UNISON members, their families and the communities they live in, particularly those living in border areas. UNISON members living in the Republic of Ireland cross the border on a regular basis to work in NI.

With the right to freedom of movement set to end, the Common Travel Area (CTA) has frequently been presented as a solution to maintaining freedom of movement for Irish and British citizens across these islands and to sustain rights associated with this, including

the right to work and access public services. However, concerns have been expressed by both the NI Human Rights Commission and the Irish Human Rights Commission that the CTA is effectively written in sand, open to change and amendment, particularly with the UK outside of the EU.

Whilst the UK and Irish Governments have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the CTA this is not legally binding and stronger action is required.

In addition, questions remain as to whether Irish citizens born in NI can even apply for the settlement scheme, regardless of the contentious question of whether they should have to in order to continue to enjoy the same rights in the place of their birth. The UK Government's response to this question has been to state that Irish citizens resident in the UK who do not hold British citizenship will be able to apply. This suggests that Irish citizens born in NI will not be able to apply for settled status, as the UK Home Office position is to automatically treat persons born in NI as British, regardless of the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement.

We have been campaigning for an international legally binding treaty between the UK and Ireland to fully clarify the rights of British and Irish citizens under the CTA; and pressing for legislative change that recognises the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement in relation to the right to identify as an Irish citizen in NI.

Protecting migrant workers: Whilst the UK did not leave the EU on March 29th, the process of migrant workers registering to remain in the UK through the EU Settlement Scheme has already begun. Whilst the Scheme was initially proposed to cost £65 pounds per person, per application, we successfully secured agreement that employers would cover the cost of the pilot programme in NI. However, the UK Government announced that it would scrap the fees entirely in January 2019 following sustained pressure from the 3 Million campaign and UNISON.

The Settlement Scheme: We have thousands of migrant worker members in NI who make a vital contribution to the delivery of public services. To protect them and their families we are working with CAJ and the Migrant Centre. We have begun the programme of branch visits to encourage our members to apply for their settled status without delay.



Many questions surround the operation of the Settlement Scheme that must be resolved, including:

- the safeguards that will be in place for vulnerable applicants;
- how reasons for refusal of settled status will be given; and
- the levels of legal assistance that will be available for those whose applications are rejected or who experience difficulties.

UNISON shares the concerns of the 3 Million campaign and we believe that there is significant potential for unfair and unjust outcomes given the sheer number of EU/EEA citizens who will need to obtain settled status.



In May, the UK Parliament Home Affairs Committee warned in a report into the Settlement Scheme that problems affecting the Scheme and a lack of certainty over the future rights of EU citizens resident in the UK risked a repeat of the Windrush scandal.

Frontier workers: Regional Council last year backed a call from our branches in border areas to protect these members. The Settlement Scheme further does not cover cross-border 'frontier' workers, who reside in the Republic of Ireland but work in NI. The Withdrawal Agreement includes frontier workers within its provisions on citizens' rights and a separate scheme recognising their status has been promised, but details as to how it will operate have yet to be revealed.

Rising racism: We have been alarmed to see the levels of racism, hatred and xenophobia that have grown to characterise the debate on exiting the EU. We are concerned about the potential for racial profiling to occur as freedom of movement ends.



The UK Government has previously suggested that checks on a person's immigration status will occur away from the land border on the island of Ireland, instead taking place when a person accesses public services or employment. We will oppose any suggestion of a 'hostile environment' approach to immigration checks being put in place and of workers being required to enforce it.

We believe that the proposed future immigration framework for the UK is flawed and will only exacerbate the difficulties that already exist in recruiting workers for our public services. The proposed salary threshold is completely unrealistic in NI in particular given the already low rates of pay experienced by workers across the public sector and by those working in private companies providing public services.

The new Home Secretary has announced that freedom of movement will end on 31st October. For EU/EEA migrants in NI an immediate end to freedom of movement would present serious challenges, particularly those who have yet to secure their settled status. The announcement also cast further doubt on the rights that frontier workers will have after 31st October. Whilst the UK Home Office have been forced to roll back from this announcement, we will continue to monitor the impact of any changes in the immigration regime in a 'no deal' scenario closely.

Securing support within the United States for protecting the peace process: We believe that the hard line approach by Boris Johnson and the UK Government is motivated by ambition to secure a de-regulated free trade deal for the UK with the United States. UNISON has been very clear that we will not accept any attempt to put our NHS up for sale nor will we allow a free trade deal that leads to major de-regulation of workers' rights or product standards. Of equal concern to us is the idea that the US and UK would strike a trade deal which compromises the Good Friday Agreement.

The UK Government underestimates the strength of support in the US for our Peace Agreement. US Congressional leaders, including Speaker Nancy Pelosi, have been clear that they will not allow a free trade deal with the UK that compromises the Good Friday Agreement. Donald Trump can talk about striking free trade deals with the UK all he wants; the reality is that it is Congress, not the President, which approves these agreements.

In response to this threat, we have helped form a unique consortium with civic and business representatives from NI. In September in Washington we met with political leaders from both the US House of Representatives and Senate, gave evidence to the Ad Hoc Committee on Protecting the Good Friday Agreement, met with the AFL CIO and several union leaders and with both the Irish and British Government teams in Washington.

Rep. Richard Neal, Chair of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee which scrutinises all US free trade deals, met with the delegation and reaffirmed strong support for the Peace Agreements. A priority over the next 12 months will be to build on this engagement.

Boris Johnson's proposal to replace the backstop: The Prime Minister has finally revealed his proposed alternative plan to replace the backstop. It is utterly unacceptable in terms of protecting the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts and his Government are going back on commitments that had previously been made to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland.

The substance of the proposal (to create a customs border on the island of Ireland) clearly undermines the Good Friday Agreement. Any form of border infrastructure for the purposes of customs controls will cause political and social tensions. We continue to demand that the UK Government must act as a co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement rather than making proposals that completely undermine it and which will negatively impact the peace process.

The idea of obtaining “*consent*” to an all island regulatory zone for goods through the NI Executive and Assembly (which has not sat for nearly 1000 days) totally misrepresents the concept of consent under the Good Friday Agreement. It stretches credulity for the UK Government on the one hand to claim that NI leaving the EU (despite it voting to remain) is not an issue of consent under the Good Friday Agreement, but that the current backstop or these alternative proposals are.

Misusing these concepts opens the real risk of further abuse of the petition of concern mechanism to effectively veto the wishes of the majority. The DUP were totally opposed previously to the backstop, and whilst they seem at the minute to be supporting these proposals, making them subject to an Assembly vote in this way allows them to

withdraw their support every 4 years if they wish. This will lead to serious ongoing economic uncertainty and major political and social tensions. The UK Government proposal would require the Assembly to consent to single market alignment on every occasion, providing the DUP and any other party or grouping so inclined with disproportionate influence over these arrangements.



Natalie Donnelly from our Black Migrant Workers' Group and Aggie Luczak from the Migrant Center NI answer members' questions about settlement status

Together with our allies in CAJ and across the Equality Coalition, UNISON has spent the last 12 months engaging with all political parties calling for a rights-based return to power-sharing that moves us away from the abuse of the petition of concern as a veto on progressive rights-based measures. Allowing the petition of concern to be used as a veto in matters relating to the backstop would be disastrous.

Finally, the new UK proposals seek to remove the protection that the backstop offered in relation to workers' rights. The threat to undermine and weaken workers' rights has significantly grown.

The reaction of the business community here in terms of the economic implications has been overwhelmingly negative. The immediate concern is that if NI is not aligned to the Republic and the wider EU for customs, then from 2021 on there will be tariffs on cross-border trade, unless the UK has struck a trade deal eliminating these by then, which seems unlikely. The economic impact of this would be disastrous.

■ Economic strategy

The NI economy has the slowest growth in the UK, rising by only 1% and being far outstripped by the Republic. The absence of Government and the impact of Brexit indicate critical challenges for our union over the next few years.

As has been highlighted above, the local economy faces an extremely uncertain future due to exiting the EU and the increasing likelihood for a 'no deal' exit. Recent economic data produced by the Ulster Bank has suggested that the private sector has entered, or is entering recession, with output falling; a fall in export orders and investment; and diminishing business confidence.

Precarious employment: The trade union economic unit NERI has found that whilst many economic indicators may suggest that the economy has recovered from the crash of 2008 (such as rising employment and falling unemployment) the reality is that the structure of the employment market has changed markedly.

Rates of economic inactivity, although falling, remain high in NI compared to Britain. Whilst 77% of all workers were in full-time employment in 2009, this has now fallen to just over 74% in 2019. In 2009, the proportion of temporary contracts amongst the workforce was 5.4%. By 2019 this had risen to 7.1%. This shows that the reported economic recovery has been built on low pay and insecure employment and has been accompanied by a complete stagnation in wages and earnings.

This rise in public sector precarious employment in particular is a major concern in terms of pay, terms and conditions, access to training and career pathways, and employment rights. UNISON negotiators are challenging this trend. We have used these findings to challenge zero hours and agency work at the bargaining table throughout 2019 and Regional Council has called on all branches to be vigilant by constantly monitoring and challenging the situation at local level.



Corporation tax: The DUP-Tory deal to secure support for Theresa May's Government states that one of the first tasks for a new NI Executive will be to work towards the devolution of corporation tax rates. This suggests that the devolution of corporation tax will remain a threat to public sector spending if a new Executive is formed. In the absence of an Executive, the introduction of a 12.5% rate has not taken place.

We will continue to oppose attempts to strip our public services of resources in this way. The introduction of a lowered corporation tax will come at a cost of a reduction of resources for public services, most recently estimated by the Department of Finance as £250 million per year.

Budget and public finances: Again, the NI Budget has been passed by the Secretary of State through Westminster. Again we and our allies have objected to the failure to genuinely consult trade unions or the public as required by law.

Despite the claim from the Chancellor in the Autumn 2018 budget that austerity is coming to an end, the NI budget still remains an austerity budget for public services. This follows the trend of previous budgets with regards to spending on our vital health, social care and education services. Whilst spending on health was to be increased, this amounts to a cut due to inflation in the cost of health and social care running at 6% per year, and cuts to Trust budgets are expected imminently.

NERI has estimated that day-to-day spending on public services in NI in 2019/20 will be lower in real terms than it was in 2010. Day-to-day spending on public services will be £600m lower in 2019/20 than it would have been in 2010.

The DUP-Tory ‘Confidence and Supply’ agreement funding: Neither the budget, nor the DUP Tory confidence and supply agreement gives us any relief from austerity. Firstly, £475 million of this package is allocated specifically for infrastructure projects, rather than the day-to-day running of public services. Of the £350 million allocated to health and education, £200 million is specifically earmarked for health services transformation. The 2019/20 budget includes £100 million in funding for health service transformation in the 2019/20 financial year, as was the case in 2018/19.

In addition, health has been allowed to carry forward a further £17 million in funding that it was unable to spend in the 2018/19 financial year. This followed UNISON challenging the Permanent Secretary and other senior Departmental representatives to ensure that these resources were not lost.

We are aware that the health and social care system struggled to spend the £100 million within a single financial year, due to the problems of recruiting staff and initiating projects within a short space of time. The

targeted recruitment of 1200 additional staff was not achieved, with many staff seconded from other parts of the HSC system to work on transformation projects, rather than new staff being recruited.

After this financial year, there will be no further additional funding available for the transformation projects and they will need to be funded out of the overall HSC budget. Given the continuing overall lack of resource within the HSC system, we are interrogating the Department of Health as to how the transformation projects will be assessed to ensure that those projects that are effective continue without further detriment to other parts of the health service.



■ Public Procurement Policy, Privatisation and PFI

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

The Department of Finance estimates that £2.6 billion is spent on NI public procurement in a typical year. In the absence of Government we cannot gauge if 2018/19 is regarded as typical and we are concerned that the privatisation agenda is moving ahead, as seen in parts of the draft Programme for Government, and despite commitments from some of the key NI parties. We continue to pursue the agenda endorsed by the 2018 Regional Council.

Our campaign for significant changes to homecare procurement processes is intensifying and we will shortly launch our UNISON NI Ethical Homecare Charter. This will call on those who commission homecare services to make commitments that their

procurement and contracting processes will ensure that private or community and voluntary sector providers pay as a minimum the real Living Wage and provide adequate terms and conditions for workers.

We want to see zero-hours contracts prohibited, the ending of 15 minute visits and no more short changing of service users. We have been engaging with each of the 5 HSC Trusts, the Department of Health and HSCB on the Charter in advance of its formal launch and will be publicly demanding that they, and all political parties, support it.

As we reported last year, we engaged substantially with the Expert Panel appointed by the previous Health Minister to examine

adult care and support. We made our opposition to the privatisation and outsourcing of the social care system clear as it does not increase efficiency, raise the quality of care or improve the quality of services.

Due to our advocacy, the 'Power to People' report published in December 2017 recognised that workers in the sector are 'exploited', underpaid and undervalued. Whilst not addressing all issues of concern, a clear recommendation has been made that workers must be paid at least the Living Wage. We have grown increasingly frustrated by the delays in implementing these recommendations by civil servants in the absence of political direction and so will be moving ahead with our new campaign.

■ Employment and trade union law

Despite the lack of a Government to legislate on the promised zero hours protection and on the gender pay gap, we have continued to press for movement on both issues at the regional negotiating bodies in both health and education as reported in Section 2. Through the round-table between ICTU and the employers organisations, we continue to highlight areas of exploitation which are dragging down skills and standards.

We are particularly concerned, despite recent assurances from the Department of the

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

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

We continue to press for change while EU laws are still in place as we have no doubt that post-Brexit the UK Government will seek to liberalise and privatise.

Economy, that the UK Government may yet attempt to claw back our devolved employment laws.



■ The environment and the green economy

In September, UNISON members across NI came out in large numbers to support the climate strikers. Faced with a climate emergency our young people have bravely organised for a better future and an end to the destruction of our planet.

Our activists joined with young people striking from schools in cities across the world to send a unified message of urgency and impatience to the global leaders at the UN Climate change summit. This important protest is simply the beginning.

Regional Committee will be encouraging all of our activists to explore green initiatives with their employers and is calling on all branches to adopt the actions in the UNISON Go Green at Work campaign.



The Scottish Government has now led the way in banning fracking. UNISON is committed to securing the same result in NI but this is yet another campaign stalled due to the absence of a Government. When it was in place, the Executive was dragging its feet on issues such as the development of the green economy and new sustainable employment. It is a tragedy that the key issue to hit the headlines was the renewable

heating initiative, the mishandling of which was instrumental in bringing down the Government. Regional Council has strongly supported our branches in Fermanagh, Antrim and Belfast by highlighting our opposition to fracking and drilling in debate at Council meetings over the past 2 years. On the return of devolution we will renew our campaign with Government.

Low pay, poverty and targeting social need

■ Challenging poverty and welfare reform

Throughout the year our members and branches have participated in seminars, lobbies and demonstrations challenging the key causes of poverty in our society – from the lack of jobs, low pay and exploitation, and cuts to the welfare benefits system, through to austerity cuts to public services and the imposition of pay rises below inflation and outside parity.

The last NI Government failed to comply with the Judicial Review decision requiring it to develop an anti-poverty strategy based on objective need. Our lobbying work continues.

Poverty and economic inequality in NI continue to dominate and are directly related to the failure of our Government to address this issue. It is a core issue for UNISON with our members, their families and communities becoming more impoverished as a result of damaging decisions by both the UK and NI Governments and irresponsible decisions by many employers.

Low pay, poverty and welfare cuts: Individuals on the lowest incomes are most dependent on state welfare support, leaving them more vulnerable to poverty over time as the full extent of welfare cuts begin to bite. Recent research from the Department of Communities shows that:

- around 78,000 individuals have a household income of between £280 – £310 per week, placing them either below or on the poverty thresholds;

- 18% of individuals in NI live in relative poverty after housing costs, with 15% living in absolute poverty;
- the long term trend shows that children in NI are at a higher risk of living in poverty than the overall population;
- the majority of those in relative poverty belong to working families. In total, 162,000 working-age adults were in relative poverty before housing costs were factored in, with 57% in working families and 43% in families where no one was in work.

This is a real challenge for our branches as they increase the number of welfare advice clinics.

UN Special Rapporteur on Poverty: Professor Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights visited the UK in November 2018.



Professor Philip Alston speaking in Belfast

UNISON NI made a submission to Professor Alston in advance of his visit highlighting:

- the abuse of the rights of those living in poverty in NI through measures such as the two-child cap for child tax credits;
- the clear detrimental linkages between poverty in NI and people's experience of economic and social rights, such as the poor educational outcomes experienced by children living in poverty and the clear, persistent link between poverty and inequality of health outcomes;
- that the most economically deprived areas of NI are those areas that were most affected by the conflict, a situation exacerbated by austerity and welfare cuts;
- that our Government has failed to bring forward an Anti-Poverty Strategy based on objective need despite the legal obligation on it to do so.

We also highlighted our ongoing campaigning and bargaining activity to secure a real Living Wage and real pay rises for public sector workers in NI, including securing pay justice for HSC workers and ending the pay deficit that has opened up with other parts of the UK.

Professor Alston visited Belfast during his visit to the UK. Following his visit he published an initial statement making significant criticisms of the approach taken across the UK to poverty. In May, Professor Alston issued his final report stating that the UK Government's policies have led to the systematic immiseration of millions and stating that the results of austerity are crystal clear. The UK Government response to the report was to claim it was politically biased and threaten to complain to the UN. However, the Department of Work and Pensions have since accepted that the report is factually correct.

“Cliff edge” – ending of welfare mitigations in 2020: UNISON NI is involved in the work of the Cliff Edge NI Coalition of civil society organisations in NI which is highlighting that welfare mitigations are set to end in March 2020 with no alternative arrangements yet in place, thus increasing poverty for both adults and children in NI.

However, to simply continue the current mitigations packages will not protect claimants from the roll out of Universal Credit, nor deal with issues arising from housing costs. A third and preferred option is to continue post 2020 with existing mitigations whilst re-profiling a substantial under-spend in the mitigations budget to provide further protection.

To end mitigations in relation to the bedroom tax and benefit cap would have particularly negative impacts. For those in receipt of mitigations for the bedroom tax, there would be a total weekly loss of nearly £410,000, with rent arrears likely to increase significantly. Ending the mitigation for the benefit cap will particularly harm families with children.



Universal credit has completed its initial roll-out in NI, meaning all new claimants are required to apply for it, rather than a legacy benefit. The full roll-out is expected by March 2023. Almost 57% of NI claimants have made an application for an advance payment of UC due to the five week wait between the initial application and the first payment. However, this assistance is paid as a loan, which immediately adds to a claimant's debt. Grants should be made available during this period.

A significant problem is the 'natural migration' of claimants from their existing benefits to UC if they experience a change in circumstances. Such claimants are entitled to no financial support for a drop in entitlement. It has been recommended that payments should be made available to cover any losses suffered.

In addition it is recommended that mitigations be offered to offset the impact of the two-child cap and protect households that include children and persons with disabilities from benefits sanctions.

The Department for Communities, which is responsible for policy and administration of welfare reform, has published a review of the delivery of welfare mitigations (March 2019).

This report highlights that continuing welfare mitigations from April 2020 will be challenging in the absence of a Minister and Executive and an Assembly. It states that continuation of mitigations would require further funding and new legislation. This report estimates the number of claimants who would be affected by the cessation of welfare mitigations next March, with 1,500 claimants affected by loss of benefits cap mitigation, and 34,000 claimants affected by loss of bedroom tax mitigation.

However, whilst this report does suggest that mitigations for these benefits should be continued, it does make similar recommendations to those made by the Law Centre, Housing Rights and Advice NI that the mitigations should be re-profiled to take account of changing circumstances. UNISON has joined with CAJ in issuing a complaint to the Department and Equality Commission over its failure to consult publically on the findings of this review and to apply its duty to assess these proposals for their impact on equality of opportunity.

In our motion to UNISON NDC 2019 we called for a campaign against the “cliff edge” ending of welfare mitigations. This will be a Regional Committee priority over the next 12 months.

To effectively tackle poverty, it is essential that Government puts poverty reduction at the core of their economic and social policies and ensures that any anti-poverty strategies are underpinned by an equality and human rights based approach. Poverty in NI will never be effectively tackled in an environment of continued cuts to welfare benefits and short-term mitigation measures.

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

Given the vulnerability of the lowest paid to poverty, we will continue to campaign for a real Living Wage based on the recommendations of the Living Wage Foundation, to be the minimum standard of pay for all workers. We have called for the introduction of the real Living Wage across all of the public sector and that it should be a condition of all procurement exercises between public bodies and the private, community and voluntary and social enterprise sectors.

As outlined above, we successfully secured a recommendation to this effect within the ‘Power to People’ report on the reform of adult social care. All campaigning on these issues will continue to be informed by our bargaining activities in combating low pay and economic inequality.



Anti-poverty strategy: Despite the clear court judgement that the Executive is in breach of its legal obligations to produce an anti-poverty strategy, no strategy based on objective need has yet emerged. UNISON has continued to call for an anti-poverty strategy and has highlighted that this should be based on the principles agreed by Anti-Poverty Network, Child Poverty Alliance and CAJ at the conference hosted by UNISON in April 2016.

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

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

Childcare: UNISON, alongside other trade unions, NIC-ICTU, our allies in the women's movement, NGOs and a number of community and voluntary organisations, have come together to form the Childcare for All campaign. This is in response to the spiralling costs of childcare, which denies parents, particularly women and the lowest paid, the opportunity to stay in work, education or training. There is still no dedicated Childcare Strategy for NI. In October 2018, the UK Government ended the Childcare Vouchers scheme for all new applicants.

The campaign is calling for universal, child centred childcare that meets the needs of children, families and childcare workers.

UNISON has signed the Childcare for All charter calling for a childcare system that is affordable, accessible, offers high quality provision and which recognises the value of childcare through decent pay and terms and conditions for workers. We will continue to work with our allies to advance the campaign objectives in the coming year.

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



■ Community & voluntary sector

Over the last 12 months our members in the community and voluntary sector have intensified the campaign against cuts to the Supporting People Programme.

This programme provides vulnerable people with support to live independently in the community, including through the provision of specialist housing or hostels.

It supports nearly 20,000 people every year and benefits a wide range of groups including the homeless; persons with disabilities; persons with mental health issues or a learning disability; older people; women at risk of domestic violence; young people at risk; and people with addiction issues.

UNISON members in the sector work hard to provide these vital services, but are doing so under increasing pressure and are suffering pay cuts or pay freezes and an erosion of their terms and conditions because of a lack

of funding. Funding is not rising to match demand and the increasing cost of providing services.

These cuts have taken place despite evidence showing that every £1 spent on the programme saves the public £1.90 elsewhere.

In November 2018, Regional Committee supported our community and voluntary sector branch in launching a campaign calling on the Department for Communities, the NI Housing Executive and all other Government Departments and public bodies with responsibilities in this area to reverse the cuts; ensure workers are not exploited further; and commission an independent, expert-led review of the programme to make recommendations on future funding.

The campaign began with a successful demonstration outside the Department for Communities HQ in Belfast, despite the attempts of the Department to frustrate this. The demonstration was supported by our allies in groups including PPR and by political representatives from Sinn Féin, People Before Profit and the SDLP.

This was followed by meetings with party political representatives to gain their support for the campaign and to ensure the issue is a high priority when the Stormont institutions are restored. Branch representatives have worked with local councillors from across the political spectrum to pass motions at council level supporting the campaign, including at Derry City and Strabane District Council.

The campaign team has been meeting regularly with officials in the Department for Communities, including the new Permanent Secretary, and with the Housing Executive.

The campaign is now focusing on opposing the proposed introduction of a standardised regional payment rate for the Supporting People Programme, which will not address the deficit in funding which has been allowed to grow, and which has the potential to lead to a 'race to the bottom' as providers attempt to reduce their labour costs and the amount of support provided to service-users.



UNISON campaigning for health and social services

Delivering Together: The 10 year strategy 'Delivering Together' was launched 3 years ago. We gave a cautious welcome to the strategy which was also accompanied by commitments on increased staffing, the Living Wage, and an emphasis on in-house delivery of homecare services.

It was the first time a Health Minister acknowledged that NHS staff and unions would play a key role in the co-design of new services and that additional funding would be required for implementation. This, coupled with the restoration of the Health Service Partnership Forum, created some optimism that we were finally going to deliver health service reform and reorganisation in a manner which genuinely involved and served the public and the workforce alike.

With the collapse of the Executive and Assembly the future of the strategy is unclear. Last year we reported that we were focusing on how decisions were being taken in the absence of political accountability.

Since then we have intensified our efforts in order to protect and promote our members rights and to act as advocate for their health, the health of their families, and public health in all dimensions of the population. We have continued to press the Department on:

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

We have been frustrated by a lack of full transparency from officials in the absence of a Minister. Given the ongoing political stalemate and the enhanced decision-making powers senior civil-servants now possess, we continue to press for full engagement with UNISON and the wider Partnership Forum.

Decisions are being taken behind closed doors which are not in keeping with the spirit of the Delivering Together strategy. We continue to robustly challenge civil servants, calling for greater transparency, particularly in relation to the spending of the £200 million allocated for health service transformation in the DUP/Tory 'Confidence and Supply' agreement.

Cuts to the health budget: We continue to fight austerity in our health service, as the budget passed by Westminster does not provide enough resources to allow our health service to stand still, let alone respond to the increasing demands and costs of providing services. We anticipate that the 5 Trusts will again bring forward 'savings plans' proposals in the coming weeks, this time amounting to nearly £50 million.



These cuts continue to be imposed on the health service, despite the last Executive agreeing that a period of 'double running' will be necessary in health and social care, to deliver existing services whilst developing and implementing change. We continue to remind the system of this commitment at every turn and will press for the investment that is desperately needed.

Challenging threats to stroke and breast assessment services: 2019 has seen the Department of Health proceed to introduce proposals to 'reform' essential services that in our view would have serious detrimental effects on the health of the public.

In stroke services, the Department has sought to remove services from Causeway and Daisy Hill hospitals, with the possibility that services may also be removed from the

South West Acute Hospital, Antrim, and the Ulster Hospital. In breast assessment services, the Department has sought to close services based at Craigavon, the City Hospital and at Linenhall St, Belfast.

Backed by Regional Council, Regional Committee and the service groups we have robustly challenged the evidence base for these proposals, which would significantly disadvantage those living in the most remote, rural areas and which could exacerbate health inequalities.

Across both sets of proposals, it is clear that the Department has not undertaken the necessary workforce engagement and planning needed for any re-organisation of services. We have been clear that the failure to properly engage with the workforce and UNISON is completely unacceptable.

Given the ongoing political situation and the powers now vested in senior civil servants, we have sought guarantees from the Department that any final decisions on the future organisation and location of these services will be taken by a democratically accountable Health Minister.

Building on our public campaigning, opposing these closures will remain a priority for Regional Committee in 2020. We congratulate all our branches who have been working closely with local community-based campaigns opposing these closures.

Review of adult social care: We reported last year on the publication of the 'Power to People – Proposals to reboot adult care and support in NI'. Due to our advocacy, the 'Power to People' report has recognised that workers in the sector are 'exploited' and are underpaid and undervalued. Whilst not addressing all issues of concern, a clear recommendation has been made that workers must be paid at least the Living Wage. We are seeking implementation of this recommendation as a priority.

Whilst UNISON is represented on the Project Team and Project Board established by the Department of Health to prepare proposals to implement the 'Power to People' report

for any incoming Health Minister, we are concerned that in the absence of a Minister and without the scrutiny of the Assembly, civil servants will simply seek to continue policies which have led to the system facing collapse and which have led to workers being exploited. In the current political vacuum, we continue to put pressure on officials to take decisions which do not require political approval and which would significantly improve the situation for our members.

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

However, we have grown increasingly frustrated at the lack of agreement and progress on implementation of the recommendations within 'Power to People'. As outlined previously, we will soon be launching our UNISON NI Ethical Homecare Charter. This will call on those who commission homecare services to make commitments that their procurement and contracting processes will ensure that private or community and voluntary sector providers pay, as a minimum, the real Living Wage and provide adequate terms and conditions for workers.

We want to see zero-hours contracts prohibited, the ending of 15 minute visits and no more short changing of service users. We have been engaging with each of the 5 HSC Trusts, the Department of Health and HSCB on the Charter in advance of its formal launch and will be publicly demanding that they, and all political parties, support it.

We have strongly opposed proposals within the new Model for Domiciliary Care from the Health and Social Care Board. It is proposed that Commissioners will delegate authority to care plan to providers. We consistently challenge the current environment on 'call cramming' and the capacity of providers to discharge their current responsibilities. The

existing procurement and commissioning processes allows providers to compete almost exclusively on the basis of cost. Giving more autonomy to providers will only make this problem worse and will negatively impact on the standard of care that will be provided.

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



Safeguarding vulnerable adults and protecting workers: At the 2018 Regional Council, the Regional Committee's report and motion on Dunmurry Manor was unanimously adopted.

The Commissioner for Older People (COPNI) published a report into Dunmurry Manor Care Home which detailed shocking and appalling abuse and neglect of residents. COPNI began its investigation into Dunmurry Manor after former members of staff alleged that poor and unsafe practices were taking place.

The report raises serious concerns about how social care settings are inspected, monitored and regulated, including in relation to how our members are enabled to raise concerns about unsafe practices, abuse or neglect.

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

regulator it responds to our members' concerns and takes appropriate actions to improve the quality of care.

We prepared a draft Protocol and sought that RQIA agree to this. However, RQIA subsequently refused to do so, on the basis that it instead wished to reach an agreement with all trade unions. It has yet to initiate a process to reach such an agreement. In our view, the actions of RQIA are unacceptable and form a completely inadequate response to the findings of the COPNI report.

We have proceeded to seek similar protocol arrangements with each Trust and the NISCC and discussions are ongoing. We have produced internal guidance for staff on how to advise and support members in raising concerns regarding the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and detailing how UNISON should report such concerns to the relevant Trust and RQIA.

We met with the review established by the Department of Health into the response of the HSC system to the failings at Dunmurry Manor and have raised our concerns with them around the current regulation of care homes. We have highlighted the ongoing issues our members face in terms of staffing levels, pay, management and trade union recognition.

Jonathan Swallow Memorial Conference: In November 2018, we held a major conference in Belfast, 'In Place of Fear – 70 Years of the NHS and Delivering Together', to both celebrate the 70th anniversary of the NHS and influence the public debate about the reform of health and social care services moving forwards. The conference was a tribute to our late friend and colleague Jonathan Swallow, who led the fight against privatisation in health, social care and education for over 30 years.

The conference heard presentations from a range of internationally renowned experts on health inequality, privatisation and social care, including Professor Allyson Pollock, Professor Peter Beresford, Professor Mark Gamsu, Professor Graham Watt and the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride. We are currently preparing for the next Jonathan Swallow Memorial Conference, which we will announce in due course.



Professor Allyson Pollock speaking at the Jonathan Swallow Memorial Conference, Nov 2018

Campaigns in our Education Services

Despite the lack of an Education Minister and a Government, we continue to press for decisions on the future of education to be taken within an equality and rights framework. UNISON demands 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 protects and strengthens the work of classroom, nursery and special needs staff;
- that protects cleaning, catering and schools based staff against the threat of privatisation;
- that ensures that all staff in schools are employed on fair contracts;
- that stops plans to curtail Special Educational Needs services for pre-school children;
- that ensures that future area planning processes consider workforce issues and maintain job levels.

Budget cuts: An ongoing concern is the impact of the sustained funding crisis on our education services. Whilst spending on education has been increased, the Department of Education has clearly stated that the 2019-20 budget outcome is effectively a real terms reduction and includes the non-funding of pay pressures for a fifth consecutive year.

Within the past 12 months, the NI Audit Office has concluded that the schools system is at “*tipping point*” with sustained reductions in real terms for schools budgets of 9.3% from 2012/13 to 2016/17. The number of schools in budget deficit has grown from 197 to 315 over the same period. A recent report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies found that NI has faced the highest spending cuts across the UK per pupil over the last decade, with an 11% real terms cut in spending per pupil since 2009.

In July, the NI Affairs Committee at Westminster published a report recommending that funding for schools be increased in line with growing pupil numbers. UNISON members working in education had taken part in a round-table evidence session with the inquiry and had raised the impacts that funding cuts have had with them.



We have already seen an attack on the extended schools programme which makes vital provision for disadvantaged children. We have previously successfully resisted attempts to remove school uniform grants and will continue to oppose any such move.

Recent announcements from Westminster suggest that NI will receive £500 million in additional funding over 3 years from 2020 as a consequence of promised additional funding for schools in England. However we

are mindful that there is no requirement that such additional funding, if it is forthcoming, should be spent on education services. The absence of a devolved Executive may hinder our education services being allocated the resources they so desperately need. Campaigning for the resources our education system needs will remain a priority over the next 12 months.

Common Funding Formula: We continue to press for greater transparency in the Education Funding Formula. The funding of education is complex as are the governance arrangements. For this reason we summarise the funding system in our annual report for the benefit of branches and members.

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.

UNISON made detailed recommendations to the last review of the common funding formula, some of which were taken on board by the previous Education Minister.

As previously reported, the initial Assembly debate on the new formula was the subject of attempts by certain politicians to sectarianise the agenda and we vigorously challenged these moves to attack objective need. It is clear that the funding formula will now not address the growing poverty of our children and this will be taken forward in the UNISON 2020 programme.

Special Educational Needs: The Education Authority continues to pursue a strategic direction for the provision of services for children with special educational needs that is more focussed on managing austerity than promoting the best interests of the child.

This has been clearly shown by the leaked EA plans in 2018 to close or merge seven of the ten special schools in the Belfast area to create three large 'super schools'.

Such a move would clearly not be in the best interests of children, will cause distress and concern for their parents and families and shows contempt for our members who work in special schools. Protecting special school provision will be a campaigning priority over the next 12 months.

We continue to call on the EA to genuinely engage with the trade union movement in relation to special school provision across all age groups. We are demanding firm commitments that any new model around Special Education Needs (SEN) provision will be supported by levels of funding that are responsive to growing demand and which

result in the needs of all children being properly met, rather than diverting children into mainstream schools inappropriately. We are firmly resisting any attempts to casualise the workforce. It is vital that the voices of the children affected and their parents are heard and acted upon.

Area Planning: We have been monitoring the Area Planning process during the 3 year cycle which began in 2017. We are clear that where UNISON has substantial membership in a school that is threatened with closure, and there is demonstrable local community support for the school to remain open, UNISON will give full support to anti-closure campaigns.

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

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



Time for Change - UNISON Partnerships that make a difference

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. This section summarises some of the work currently being undertaken on 2 key unique collaborative partnerships that UNISON has developed with the Northern HSC Trust and the NI Ambulance Trust.

These partnerships follow a long line of UNISON initiatives since the year 2000 in areas such as homecare; nursing homes; ward based infection control; and in maternity, A&E and laundry services. They have involved all staff groups including homecare workers, cleaners, catering staff, nurses, midwives and doctors working together to enhance the delivery of health and social care services; and improve outcomes for patients, clients and other service users.

The collaborative partnership model has its origins in the pioneering UNISON / Royal Hospitals Support Services Partnership and has also been influenced by the work of the International Action Research Project between unions and employers in NI and New York.

UNISON only participates in this joint way of working on the basis that it improves both care standards and our members' lives at work, including their job satisfaction, health and well-being.

All projects we develop:

- must help to secure their jobs;
- must create increased opportunities for frontline workers to have a voice in how quality care is delivered;
- must be based on true inclusion, real equality of decision-making, as well as trust and respect for UNISON members;
- must be supported at the highest level of the organisation and attract sufficient employer resources and other practical support.

The partnerships we have developed to date have all provided compelling evidence that fostering a collaborative partnership approach in our health and social services is an effective way to make a real difference to the working lives of staff and the services they deliver.



UNISON / Employer partnership training:

Union/Employer Partnership Advisor, Pamela Dooley, continues to deliver UNISON's bespoke partnership training programme for managers and union activists. This programme continues to play a key role in our current partnerships with the Northern Trust and the NI Ambulance Service and is ensuring that the principles and processes of partnership (such as team effectiveness, recognising individual and joint interests; the importance of good measurement and sustaining partner participation) remain core concerns.

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

As reported last year, this Partnership with the Northern Trust is focused on improving service delivery and the working lives of domestic and catering services staff at the Antrim Hospital site. In particular, UNISON and the Trust are aiming to prove that a satisfied, motivated, respected, and highly trained domestic and catering services workforce can provide improved outcomes for staff, patients and service delivery.

A survey completed by over 200 staff in 2017 highlighted a number of issues for action with low staff morale and satisfaction across key work factors such as supervision, team working and involvement in decision-making.

As a result the partnership developed a series of interventions:

- to improve workplace relationships and role respect between staff groups; between staff and managers; and between staff, patients and the public;
- to promote teamwork and better communications;
- to enhance the sense of personal control workers have over their jobs;
- to enhance perceived fairness in the applications of policies and procedures;
- to improve the physical working environment;
- to address educational and skills deficits and increase opportunities for job progression;
- to improve the health & wellbeing of staff.



Specific activities to date have included:

- focus groups across all occupations and shifts to identify key issues and challenges;
- communications training for supervisors to improve communications with the staff on the ground;
- the initiation of more regular team meetings, with the opportunity for staff to participate more effectively and put forward issues for discussion;
- the organisation of staff information sessions to increase understanding of the content and application of Trust policies;
- the development of a poster and other materials highlighting the importance of domestic staff reporting any concerns with regard to infection control;
- the use of hospital communications to increase the profile of domestic and

catering staff and the essential jobs that they do;

- a review of induction and BICS training to ensure that all staff have the necessary skills to undertake work in all areas and to give staff the opportunity to become BICS trainers.

The partnership will be evaluated in the coming months and we will assess our successes and the ongoing challenges that remain. These include how to better engage with nursing staff and supervisors on issues of respect; how to improve communications across all areas and groups on an ongoing basis - including with patients, visitors, between staff groups and with management; and how we ensure that team meetings actually take place and are effective. A key issue moving forward will be how to ensure that the positive working relationships developed through the partnership process are maintained in the longer term.

UNISON / NI Ambulance Service Health & Wellbeing Partnership:

This partnership with the NI Ambulance Service has a specific health and wellbeing focus given the historic issues of work-related stress facing NIAS staff. Following the launch of the partnership by the Regional Secretary and NIAS Chief Executive in December 2017, a survey was completed by over 200 staff at 5 ambulance stations, HQ Belfast and in Altnagelvin control.

While there were some positive findings in the survey, it revealed areas of significant concern for staff with regard to how satisfied they are with their job, and how this may be impacting on their health and wellbeing. Particular issues of concern raised included that:

- a high proportion of staff have low morale and are dissatisfied on key work factors such as their supervision, pay and opportunities for career advancement;
- a high proportion are dissatisfied with service quality and its delivery;
- paramedics are less likely to be satisfied than any other group;
- a significant proportion of staff perceive exposure to bullying and harassment;

- a high proportion of staff experience stress and mental health problems due to work. However, few have been formally diagnosed with a mental health problem or feel able to cope with or mitigate stress by talking to their line manager or colleagues;
- many staff do not disclose mental health issues because they either do not think they will get adequate support, do not feel comfortable talking to their line manager, or do not feel able use other support networks such as occupational health or on-site counselling
- more regular and effective team meetings;
- increased support for staff returning from sick leave, including more effective and supportive return work interviews;
- that training needs are met;
- better relationships/respect between management and staff and between staff groups;
- protected time for meal breaks.

To address these concerns, the Project Steering Group have particularly prioritised:

- better relationships and communications between staff groups and with management;
- management and staff skills development to promote more effective leadership and better communications; and
- the empowerment of women workers.

To promote positive working and improving relationships a series of meetings have taken place during 2018/2019 in Ardoyne, Newry, Newtownards, Bangor, Omagh, Altnagelven Control and HQ Control to identify issues of concern and better ways of working.

Priority issues raised by staff in Altnagelvin include the need for:

- a comprehensive training needs analysis;
- the development of a new agreed operating manual;
- updated radio systems;
- an agreed script for difficult calls;
- better understanding on how to use the complaints procedure;
- better relationships/respect between management and staff and between staff groups;
- information on the strategic direction of NIAS and the role of private crews;
- recognition of mental health concerns.

Station staff prioritised:

- the consistent use of policies;
- that difficulties with the new calls process are addressed;
- a computerized Daytex system;



To protect and improve the health & wellbeing of staff, in April 2019 NIAS employed a new member of staff to work directly on health & wellbeing issues and to support the work of the partnership. In June the Action Cancer 'Big Bus' visited HQ and all divisions across NI. This was followed by activity during Men's Health Week to increase awareness of preventable health problems, support healthier lifestyle choices, and encourage the early detection and treatment of health difficulties.

A health and wellbeing evening was held for staff in the Silverbirch Hotel, Omagh in October and was well attended by staff. Omagh station staff were involved in the organisation of the event. The partnership is also supporting the development of Peer Support with 10% of NIAS staff having already accessed peer support debriefing.

The need for a revitalised Women's Development Forum was a key issue identified through the survey process and in discussions with staff. At its June meeting held in HQ Belfast, a number of sub-groups were

established to develop a work programme on issues including mental and physical health; stress; women's development; caring responsibilities; menopause; and domestic violence.

At the September meeting of the Forum, the Trust Chairperson was in attendance and a decision was taken to develop a return to work process for those staff suffering from cancer. A further decision was made to look at ambulances carrying products used by staff going through the menopause. Membership of the Forum is open to all women working for NIAS. It will meet every two months at locations throughout NI.

These are only some of the issues being addressed by the Partnership, but changing the current culture within NIAS will remain a key focus, with action required in all areas.

Projects in development: Future projects are under discussion with other Trusts to ensure that the best practice we have developed through this partnership process is transferred to other areas and disciplines. We also continue to intervene in areas of previous partnership activity to ensure the positive outcomes achieved are not undermined when new policies are agreed or new decision-makers are appointed who do not know the history, principles or achievements of the partnership process.

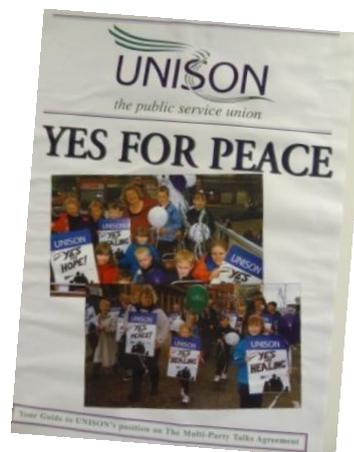
Equality and human rights

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.

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 'Yes for Peace' leaflet that was produced in 1998 in support of the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent Referendum

The Impact of an EU exit on equality and human rights protections, including the Human Rights Act: We cannot overstate the threat to our Peace Agreement of an exit from the EU and, in particular, a 'no deal' exit.

The Good Friday Agreement sought to protect human rights in NI through requiring that the UK Government incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into law, with direct access to the courts and remedies for alleged violations of rights. This was done through the Human Rights Act 1998.

The Tories have repeatedly stated a desire to repeal the Human Rights Act 1998. Its repeal would breach the terms of the Good Friday Agreement. Repeal of the Act becomes even more likely after an exit from the EU. EU member states are required to be members of the European Convention on Human Rights, a requirement that would no longer apply to the UK.

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

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

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

The Charter potentially offers greater protection of rights than the Human Rights Act, as it allows for legislation to not be applied where it conflicts with the Charter, due to the supremacy of EU law. The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 removes the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights from the body of EU law that will be retained in UK law after the UK exits the EU.

We will continue to fight to reinstate the Charter.

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

The promise of guaranteed human rights in a strong, enforceable Bill of Rights has been systematically blocked not only by local political parties but by successive UK governments. Its continued rejection by the UK Government (due to the lack of local political consensus) is particularly irresponsible at this point in the Peace Process. A Bill of Rights for NI could be used to protect rights based in EU law in the future, and limit the power of Government to weaken those rights. It is now needed more than ever.

Abortion rights and marriage equality: In July, Westminster passed the NI (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019. This act represented a hugely important development in relation to giving effect to a women's right to choose and marriage equality in NI.



Rally for Choice, Belfast - Sept 2019

The campaign for abortion rights by UNISON and our allies has been a long-running one. For decades we have been part of a coalition which has campaigned, lobbied, protested, marched, researched, engaged in consultations, made presentations, listened to and published women's stories, pursued court action and supported the cause of over

1,000 women per year being forced to travel and pay for healthcare.

Section 9 of the 2019 Act will mean that abortion will be effectively de-criminalised in NI. It requires the Secretary of State to make regulations giving effect to the 2018 UN CEDAW report on abortion rights in NI by 31st March 2020. UNISON gave evidence to CEDAW. The report found that the UK Government was responsible for grave and systemic human rights violations under the CEDAW Treaty for its continued criminalisation of terminations of pregnancy in NI and its failure to provide terminations in cases of serious foetal abnormality, rape and incest.

UNISON activists have played a leading role in the Love Equality campaign for marriage equality. NI remains the only jurisdiction in these islands not to have legislated for equal marriage. Section 8 of the 2019 Act requires the Secretary of State to make regulations providing for equal marriage in NI by 13th January 2020.

It is important to recognise, however, that this legislation only comes into effect if an Executive is not formed by 21st October, but at the time of writing this seems extremely unlikely.

Regional Committee congratulates all UNISON activists and our allies that fought and campaigned over many years for these rights to be realised. We will continue to press for the law to be changed without delay.



March for equal marriage, Belfast - May 2019

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; and the Practice and Participation of Rights in particular, and report on key developments below.

■ The Equality Coalition - Challenging equality breaches

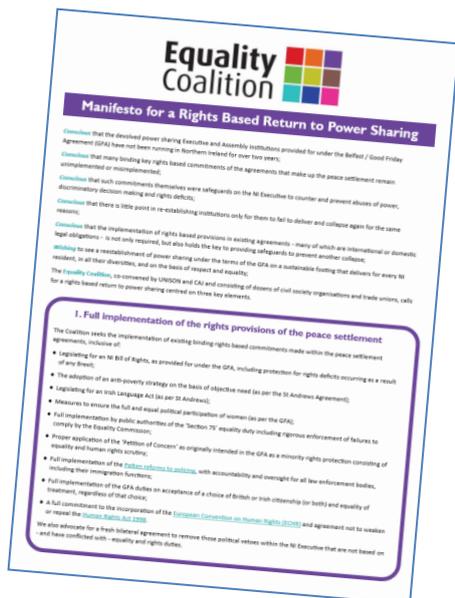
The Equality Coalition is co-convened by UNISON and CAJ and has over 80 member organisations. A number of these are themselves umbrella groups and the largest and most diverse is the trade union movement. There has been, and remains, no other collective voice on equality in NI. There remains no other overarching consistent 'critical friend' of the equality oversight bodies, public authorities and local government.

This year with the continued support of the UNISON Campaign Fund the Coalition kept the unfulfilled equality and human rights provisions of the peace settlement high on the political agenda in the current

negotiations and EU Exit processes. We secured a commitment that an incoming Labour government would legislate for the NI Bill of Rights and fulfil other outstanding rights-based commitments of the peace settlement. The work has been taken forward under four strands.

1: Campaigning for a 'rights based return' to power sharing and promoting collective activism & solidarity: The Coalition developed a manifesto for a 'rights based return' to genuine power-sharing in NI, pressing for the implementation of unimplemented safeguards in the Peace Agreements, other unfulfilled rights, international obligations, and measures to ensure power works within

the rules, as a mechanism to re-establish governance in a manner which counters the abuses of power that led to the collapse of the Assembly.



The Coalition engaged with the Stormont talks working groups, parties and two Governments, and promoted collective action on NI 'rights deficits' (including on LGBT, reproductive and minority language rights). The manifesto was discussed at a launch event with the Shadow Secretary of State, Tony Lloyd MP, who committed an incoming Labour government to implementing the outstanding rights based commitments of the peace settlement.



Tony Lloyd MP, shadow Secretary of State at the Manifesto discussion, 27 June 2019

2: Enforcement of the equality duty - harnessing the duty - mainstreaming equality: The project to enforce the Section 75 equality duty carried into a 2nd year, challenging public authority compliance with the Equality Duty in policy areas affecting socio-economic rights, and engaging in

training with members. Among the policy issues subject to challenge by the project are:

- the 'cliff edge' situation with the welfare 'reform' mitigations package due to expire next March 2020;
- the equality screening of the NI Budget by all Government Departments;
- the proposed policy of allowing taxis in bus lanes;
- the two child rule in Universal Credit;
- the 'English-only' street sign policy of Newtownabbey and Antrim Council,
- HMRC's failure to adopt an Equality Scheme;
- practices of 'racial profiling' through passport checks (with no legal basis) on the Irish sea and land border;
- paediatric post-mortem provision in NI;
- the North West Regional Transport Hub and other policy areas.

The Coalition met regularly with the Equality Commission (ECNI) and in particular engaged with it over changes to its own procedures for investigating and enforcing the equality duty. The ECNI had reviewed the procedures following a complaint to the NI Ombudsman by CAJ, which led to a resolution where the Commission would review its procedures and insert timescales within them, in the context of long delays at present.

3: BREXIT - protecting the socio-economic rights of workers, communities and service users: We continued to take forward a body of interventions to protect the above socio-economic rights and entitlements, particularly challenging detrimental policy proposals and decisions taken further to the EU Exit process. In particular we ran a major conference in March 2019 – entitled "Divided by the Rules?" highlighting the particular problems of the Brexit process creating new boundaries between different groups of citizens NI – whether British and Irish citizens or with our migrant worker communities.

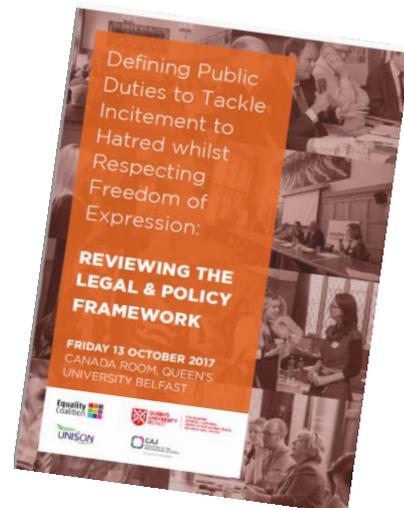
Keynote speakers and panel members included Regional Secretary, Patricia McKeown; Local Organiser for our black and migrant workers, Nathalie Donnelly; and Policy Officer, John Patrick Clayton.

We also worked with a new CAJ equality research and legal intervention project focusing on the impacts on migrants in NI, as workers, service users and within the community - furthering interventions to counter racial profiling and the sub-contracting of hostile environment measures to public sector staff, particularly in NI due to the land border. In particular we raised concerns about the lack of certainty and provision for frontier workers and the weakness in the proposed model for the 'Common Travel Area' including as regards reciprocal health provision.

4: Countering hate expression and incitement to hatred: We continued to work particularly on an 'intervention' policy by public authorities (including the Department of Justice and related agencies, but also councils, health trusts, and the NI Housing Executive) to tackle racist, sectarian, homophobic, disablist and misogynistic expression in public space and to tackle the present largely 'non intervention' policy - particularly where there is suspicion of paramilitary involvement/endorsement.

Mid 2019 saw the establishment of the judge-led NI Hate Crimes Review team led by Judge Marrinan. The review had followed a decision taken by former Justice Minister Claire Sugden MLA in 2017. In October 2017

the Coalition had held a major conference in Queen's University presenting the findings of Equality Coalition commissioned-research on countering incitement to hatred in NI. The conference was opened by the (former) Justice Minister and featured contributions from coalition members. It was addressed by international experts along with senior justice and PSNI officials.



In light of the establishment of the review in October 2019 the Coalition launched the conference report in Queen's University. Judge Marrinan addressed the remit of the hate crimes review and Coalition members led a panel discussion on the harms and impacts of hate expression.

■ Conflict and dealing with the past

The shooting dead of our friend and colleague Lyra McKee earlier this year (see Section 1) reminds us all that we still live in a precarious society and that we have yet to emerge from conflict.

We reported last year on the public consultation taking place on establishing the institutions set out within the Stormont House Agreement to deal with the legacy of the conflict. We responded to this consultation process, endorsing the submission of the Model Bill Team - a Joint Project between Queen's University Belfast, CAJ, and the Transitional Justice Institute of Ulster University.

UNISON membership encompasses victims and survivors of the conflict from all groups. The Peace Agreement promise to address their issues was a key factor in their support for it. The current approach to dealing with the past and the legacy of the conflict is not working and in particular is not delivering for victims and survivors.

We have called on the UK Government, Irish Government and all political parties to finally deal with a matter that is fundamental to peace and reconciliation in our society through enacting the series of measures within the Stormont House Agreement in a human rights compliant manner.

Whilst we agree with the conclusion of the Model Bill Team that these measures remain far from perfect, we share their concern that if this overarching package of measures is not delivered, victims and survivors will have been failed once again.

We have called on the NI Office to accept the recommendations of the Model Bill Team and amend the Draft NI (Stormont House Agreement) Bill as necessary before it is laid before Parliament. In particular, UNISON would highlight serious concern at the

omission from these proposals of a pension for the seriously injured.

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

■ Bill of Rights and Human Rights Consortium

UNISON continues to be represented on the Consortium Board by Thomas Mahaffy.



Bill of Rights: The issue of a Bill of Rights moved up the political agenda in recent months as part of the ongoing talks process to restore devolution. We have also proposed that it would be a partial solution to the problems caused by Brexit. UNISON, alongside colleagues from CAJ and the Human Rights Consortium, will continue to press our local politicians on this issue. If, as in previous agreements, the parties demote the importance of a Bill of Rights we will hold them to account for the failure to advance this issue.

NI Human Rights Festival: Each year the 10th December is celebrated as Human Rights Day across the world. The date marks the UN General Assembly's adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. Civil society groups across the world use this date as an opportunity to celebrate and mark the importance of human rights globally. Every year a diverse range of organisations across NI have traditionally held events in the week surrounding this date to mark the occasion and highlight different aspects of human rights as they apply locally and internationally. As with last year, the

Consortium will invite groups and individuals to submit events to be included in the festival programme and UNISON Regional Committee will support.

No to No Deal Campaign: The Consortium, alongside UNISON, NICVA and NUS-USI, launched the civil society No to No Deal campaign in September. This ongoing campaign is aimed at highlighting civil society's opposition to a disastrous no deal exit from the EU.



The Consortium has received support from across the trade union movement, community and voluntary sector, environmental groups and the business community.

The campaign has been heavily supported on social media sites and members of the campaign team have appeared in the media to explain why a no deal exit would have such profound impacts. We will continue our joint campaign against a no deal exit in the run-up to 31st October.

■ Participation and the Practice of Rights

UNISON NI continues to work in partnership with the Participation and Practice of Rights (PPR) organisation founded by Inez McCormack. Thomas Mahaffy, Head of Organising & Development, represents UNISON on the Board.

PPR works on social and economic rights issues and puts human rights principles and tools at the service of marginalised communities. Currently, PPR organises across the island of Ireland and with partners in Scotland. Regional Secretary, Patricia McKeown, was guest speaker at the 2019 AGM.

Housing4All: In August, Housing4All launched their report 'Prison Without Walls: Asylum, Migration and Human Rights' outlining the denial of fundamental rights to the housing, education, employment and health experienced by asylum seekers in NI. As part of this campaign, in September PPR launched *housingrightswatch.com* – a web application enabling asylum seekers to lodge human rights complaints to the Chief Executive of the private provider Mears Group Plc and the Department for Communities.

In the face of Housing Executive and Departmental refusal to protect the rights of asylum seekers, PPR and Housing4All continue to lead a coalition of housing associations, homeless service providers, community funders and faith-based organisations to provide accommodation to destitute asylum seekers who have 'no recourse to public funds'. The pilot with Choice Housing Association, providing flats for 4 asylum-seeking women, is set to expand to a potential 20 more spaces in 2020.

Equality Can't Wait: Equality Can't Wait/Build Homes Now have worked with people experiencing homelessness and those who have arrived through the Syrian Resettlement Scheme, in conjunction with QUB Planning Department, to develop participatory plans for sustainable social housing on the Mackies site in west Belfast. They have secured the support of the Belfast Lord Mayor for much

needed social housing at the site to address chronic homelessness.

PPR have also received a Beartha Foundation Fellowship alongside investigative journalist site, The Detail, to explore the links between property development, sectarianism and housing policy in Belfast. As part of the fellowship, young Equality Can't Wait activists have visited South Africa housing movements in Capetown to exchange learning.



Homeless Action: PPR have supported people living in homeless hostels, but not formally recognised as 'homeless' by the Housing Executive, through the #FDAnoDelay campaign. The campaign aims to ensure that anybody residing in homeless accommodation is provided with a housing needs assessment within one week, or is granted temporary FDA (Full Duty Applicant status) pending formal assessment.

#FDAnoDelay has received the official support of Derry and Strabane, Belfast, Causeway Coast & Glens, ABC and Mid-Ulster Councils. Alongside Housing4All, Homeless Action launched *housingrightswatch.com* in September and received endorsements from the UN Rapporteur on the Right to Housing.

Mental Health Rights Movement: In January members of #123GP campaign launched their research and proposals calling for an increase in total expenditure of the health budget on mental health (currently 5.2%) and the provision of accessible counselling service at primary care level. In March 2019, #123GP teamed up with 6 other health movements across England through Nesta's Social Movements in Health programme to accelerate the campaign through the adoption of new tactics for change.

Right to Work: Right to Welfare (R2W): R2W are a group of unemployed people and others on benefits experiencing welfare reform first hand. In 2019 R2W were informed by the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Communities that their #PeoplesProposal campaign, which aims to use existing powers within the civil service decision making process to prevent destitution as a result of sanctions, produced a 57% reduction in sanctions issued by the Department across NI (600 to 250).

Additionally, between 30-40 human rights complaints have been submitted to the Department regarding social security assessments by campaign activists. At least 75% of these complaints have resulted in improvements for people.

PPR Scotland: In May PPR were invited to convene a group of human rights and community activists in Edinburgh to scope out the potential for establishing an organisation in Scotland capable of supporting grassroots campaigns on social and economic rights issues. In 2020, it is hoped that PPR will provide governance and institutional support to enable Scottish activists to build on their work to date.

Irish Travellers: In August, PPR were commissioned by the St Stephen's Green Trust to carry out research on rights-based approaches to Traveller accommodation across the island. The research, to be

released in early 2020, will provide critical reflections on how Traveller movements are challenging discrimination and structural inequality and how they can be supported to be more effective.



Trade Union Movement: PPR worked with the INTO-sponsored Right to Education (R2E) group of pupils, teachers and parents to carry out a survey to understand the impact of academic selection on children. *'Could make or break a child: The state of human rights and academic selection in NI'* surveyed 260 people directly affected and developed a series of recommendations.

Since the launch R2E have met with the Department for Education and the Education Authority to discuss implementing proposals monitoring the mental health impacts of academic selection.

PPR continues to work with UNISON branches as well as providing training as part of the UNISON regional education programme.

■ Women at work and in society

Discrimination against women: The 8th periodic review of the UK with regard to adherence to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) took place in February 2019, at the UN headquarters in Geneva. Regional Committee supported the CAJ formal submission to the CEDAW Committee in advance of this session.

It highlighted three areas related to NI, (i) abortion legislation in NI and the competency of UK Parliament; (ii) countering incitement to hatred on the grounds of gender; and (iii)

women's full and equal participation in public and political life – the gender related impact of the NI conflict.

Through ICTU, we were also party to the submissions from women's organisations. ECNI and the NI Human Rights Commission submitted shadow reports.

We continue to lag behind Scotland and Wales on legislation outlawing domestic violence and sexual abuse, and legislation on social and economic rights. NI has the lowest provision for childcare and women and children have borne the greatest impact of welfare cuts.

In its incitement to hatred legislation, unique to NI, women are excluded.

In the absence of regulations, we continue to pursue gender pay reporting by employers. Women are still concentrated in lower paid, lower status, often part-time work. They have higher rates of economic inactivity due to family and home commitments. They are the greatest losers in the event of cuts to the welfare system. They form 83% of UNISON NI membership.

Abortion: In February 2018 the vice chair of CEDAW stated, *“The situation in NI constitutes violence against women that may amount to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.”*

As reported above there has now been dramatic movement on the issue of abortion rights. However, there is still a long way to go. Our work on confirming abortion as a workplace issue has been ground breaking. The prospect of new legislation is widely anticipated. Our members participated in the recent mass rally calling for Westminster to legislate but it is clear that we must continue the campaign alongside the women’s movement and, in particular, Alliance for Choice and other allies.

Solidarity

■ UNISON Solidarity Group

Throughout the past year, the members of our regional Solidarity Group have been deeply involved in a host of initiatives. They and their branches continue to engage in solidarity organisations such as Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUFPP), Ireland Palestine Solidarity, Justice for Colombia and the ICTU Global solidarity programme. Group member Stephen McCloskey is also the Director of the Center for Global Studies and our group is Chaired by Conor McCarthy from RVH & Muckamore branch.

Throughout 2019 the group and other branch activists took part in seminars, conferences and public demonstrations including

Women’s movement: As evidenced by the report of our Women's Committee in Section 1, we continue to play our role in the wider women’s movement on a host of initiatives aimed at highlighting the multiple discrimination faced by women in our society.



As UNISON we also bring the issue to the table with employers and have made women’s rights a key demand for supporting the return of devolved Government.

Impact of conflict on women: We continue to press the UK Government to include women in NI in its action plans for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 on women in conflict. This will again be one of our core demands in our forthcoming UNISON manifesto for the General Election and any future Assembly elections.

presenting at a fringe meeting at the UNISON National Delegate Conference in Liverpool in June and at the ICTU Biennial Conference in Dublin in July.

In August we also participated in the ICTU Global Solidarity summer school in Wexford. NI branches also continue to contribute to the main UNISON debate with motions to NDC.

We are currently preparing for the Joint Regional Seminar with UNISON Scotland, UNISON North West and UNISON Northern which is scheduled for Newcastle in November.

■ Cuba

We continue to work with the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. Our initiative with the Cuban Health Service, led by our Group Chair, Conor McCarthy, is progressing and we hope to make a groundbreaking announcement in the near future.



■ Palestine

Trade Union Friends of Palestine: UNISON chairs TUFPP which is the ICTU recognised trade union solidarity organisation for Palestine. UNISON is also represented on the main TUFPP group and its steering group. Our colleagues in the Republic have reorganised TUFPP in that jurisdiction and we are now working jointly on the campaign for Palestinian rights.

A further significant initiative is the Conference scheduled for Dublin in November on the rights of the Palestinian Child. Unfortunately this important conference clashes with the joint regions UNISON seminar but we are fielding delegations for both.

Gaza: Building on the work of Dr Mona Al Farah, Director of the Middle East Children's Alliance based in Gaza and the work of human rights lawyers and others in Palestine and Israel, the plight of the children of Gaza and the Occupied Territories will be highlighted at the November conference in Dublin. In May, following the Israeli bombing raid on Gaza we joined the IPSC/ TUFPP protest at the BBC in Belfast.

Belfast hill walk in support of Gaza: In August, RVH & Muckamore branch again hosted their annual hill walk in support of Gaza. The event, now in its 11th year, is part of the Feile 2019 programme and continues to raise funds for humanitarian aid for children in Gaza.



Right of Return: On 18th May UNISON branches supported a march and rally in Belfast to mark the anniversary of the Right of Return. Speakers included Patricia McKeown (UNISON and TUFPP) a live link with Gaza, and speakers from IPSC and KAIROS

Eurovision: UNISON members joined in protest action across Ireland. The main alternative event was screened in the Regional Centre in Belfast while in Derry LGBT activists participated in the alternative event reported in Section 1.

Israeli activist visit: We were delighted to host Shahaf Weisbein (Project Co-ordinator, Women for Peace) on an 8 day visit during which she met with UNISON branch committees and members, presented at an event in Galway House, travelled to Belfast, Derry and Dublin and was hosted by other unions involved in TUFPP.



Israeli peace and women's activist Shahaf Weisbein (3rd from right) meets UNISON reps and staff

Shahaf should have been accompanied by her Palestinian counterpart Lama Yahya, but Lama was denied a visa for travel. Shahaf shared her experiences of being a member of an Israeli army family and a passionate activist for Palestinian rights.

Fringe at NDC: Following the NEC fringe at this year's conference, the RVH & Muckamore branch and Down Education hosted a further fringe with Palestinian film maker, Mohammed Alazza, who has visited us with delegations of young people from the Lajee centre in the Aida refugee camp. The film documenting the trauma experienced by Mutaz, a young Palestinian boy who had visited us last year and was later arrested and jailed by the IDF, was the subject of discussion at the fringe.

An extract from the film was also shown at the TUFPP fringe at the ICTU conference in Dublin. The fringe also heard from Israeli human rights lawyer Nery Ramati who works with Palestinian child Prisoners

TUFPP Ambassadors programme: We continue to support the TUFPP Ambassador's programme and a further 2 UNISON delegates are scheduled for the 2019 visit later in the year.



Israeli human rights lawyer Nery Ramati speaking at TUFPP fringe at ICTU Conference, Dublin.

The European Trade Union Network (ETUN): UNISON continues to be the main union in the UK supporting the Network. It is growing in strength as unions from across Europe sign up to the Programme aimed at ending the preferential EU trade agreement with Israel and challenging the arms trade. The Regional Secretary chaired the first ETUN fringe at the European Public Service Union (EPSU) conference in Dublin in June.

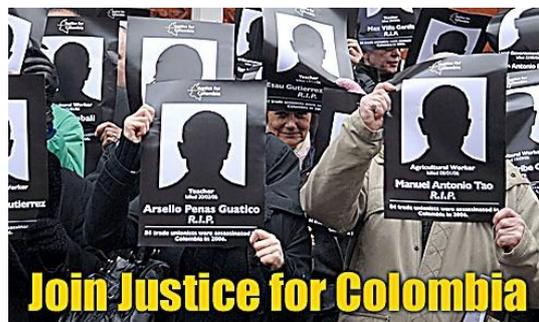
■ Colombia

Regional Committee and our Global Solidarity Group encourage all UNISON branches to become involved and monitor affiliation.

We continue to support Justice for Colombia and the trade union campaign challenging inequality, denial of human rights, and in particular the assault on trade unionists, human rights activists and peace activists. We also remain involved in the NI trade union cross-party initiative established by Justice for Colombia (JFC) in support of the Colombian Peace Process. Despite the peace accord, the killings continue on a daily basis with trade unionists, human rights activists and journalists remaining key targets. This makes the work of JfC all the more critical.

We continue to support all 4 main planks of JfC's work (i) supporting trade unionists; (ii) human rights in Colombia; (iii) free political prisoners; and (iv) the Peace Campaign.

Regional Secretary Patricia McKeown and FORSA General Secretary Kevin Callinan are the Ireland representatives on the Board of JfC.



In May 2019 Anne Speed, UNISON NI Head of Bargaining, visited Colombia on the 3rd JFC Peace Monitoring visit sponsored by Forsa. The delegation included Labour Party politicians, Senator Paul Gavan (Sinn Fein), Grahame Smith (General Secretary, STUC), Eoin Ronayne (Joint General Secretary, Forsa), and delegates from POA, CWU and Unite.

The intensive visit included 8 flights over 6 days and at least 4 meetings per day with trade unionists, human rights defenders, the Farc, political activists and the Colombian people in both urban and rural areas. It is clear that much of the promised commitment in the peace accord remains unimplemented. The issue of land redistribution is one of the most outstanding.



3rd JfC peace monitoring delegation visit to village of Cahibio in Cauca province, May 2019

Assassinations continue unchecked and the peace process is in jeopardy.

The delegation visited both the Northern and Southern regions of Colombia. They also met with both Irish and British ambassadors and representatives of the Colombian Government. The delegation returned with a programme for action.

In July, a JfC update video on the current precarious situation was shown at the ICTU Biennial Conference. It is available for UNISON branches.

Other global solidarity work

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

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

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

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

Working in the wider trade union movement

ICTU

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

Executive Council of Congress and Standing Orders Committee: Patricia McKeown and Anne Speed were both re-elected to the Executive Council at the 2019 Biennial Conference in Dublin. Denis Keatings was re-elected to the Standing Orders Committee. UNISON's motions on (1) Return of devolved government in NI within an equality and human rights framework, and (2) Protecting the rights of workers north and south post-Brexit, were extensively debated and carried unanimously. The UNISON delegation made significant contributions throughout the agenda. Table 12 sets out UNISON involvement in the Congress. The 2019 ICTU Biennial Conference is scheduled for Dublin in July.

Supporting Workers in Struggle: Throughout the year Regional Committee and our branches have supported a number of industrial struggles by other unions including

action by UTU, INTO, NASUWT, NIPSA, INMO, GMB, Unite and NUJ. The most recent being the impending closure of Harland and Wolff. UNISON reps and members joined workers on the picket lines at the shipyard and in protests at Stormont and Belfast City Hall. The recent purchase of the yard has vindicated the stance taken by the workers over a 9 week period and we congratulate them and their unions.



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

May Day: Once again UNISON branches and self-organised groups fully participated in the 2019 May Day rally and parade. The parade paused at the front of Belfast City Hall and a brief tribute was made to murdered NUJ member Lyra McKee and all workers facing the threat of violence.

The aim of the ICTU 'Better work, Better Lives' campaign is to protect peoples' jobs and create new employment. UNISON members have participated in the lobby activity across the 18 Parliamentary constituencies and we are still seeking additional volunteers to become part of the campaign. ICTU has recently released an update on campaign activity and its plan for the next stage. We are encouraging members to use the Better Work, Better Lives website and, in particular, to use the tools available to lobby MLAs and MPs. All participants in the campaign will be invited to attend a further ICTU event in early 2019. Through the Northern Committee of ICTU we have continued to raise the campaign with political parties and Government Departments.

Events and seminars: Throughout the year, members and activists participated in ICTU events and seminars and training programmes on a wide range of trade union priorities.

The Connolly Centre: Regional Committee has become a sponsor of the Connolly Visitor Centre and Museum which was formally opened in April 2019 by President Michael D Higgins. Speakers at the opening included US trade union leaders, Frances O'Grady General Secretary of the TUC and Owen Reidy of ICTU. The opening ceremony followed a march in which UNISON branches and Regional Committee members took part. The centre is now fully operational and several UNISON branches have already visited the exhibition or taken part in seminars and discussions.



Table 12 - UNISON representation on ICTU structures

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

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.



Developing an efficient and effective union

Finance & Managing Resources

■ Summary Accounts – Lay Activity Fund

The audited regional accounts for the year ending 31 December 2018 have been distributed to all branches and delegates.

The UNISON NI lay activity budget for 2018 was £100,312.12. The allocation for 2019 is £100,939.08, representing a 0.7% 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 £2,750 was donated to projects through the following organisations:

- Peace & Neutrality Alliance

- Reclaim the Agenda
- Ballymena Trades Council
- Jim Connell Society
- Nigerian Community NI
- Alternative Eurovision
- Belfast City of Sanctuary
- Denise Galbraith
- UNISON President's Charity - Mothers and Babies in Malawi
- South African Heart
- Alliance for Choice
- NarropFoesta
- Tar Isteach
- Cork Mother Jones Festival

Regional Committee also affiliated to a total of 15 organisations in 2018/2019 at a cost of £1,960.

■ Branch finance

All branches submitted their annual returns on time and within rule and all branches attended NDC in 2018 with 1 branch in partial attendance.

A number of NI branches were audited in 2018 and 2019. Common issues raised included general issues of good practice on

recording expenditure decisions and filing receipts. Regional Committee has drawn all issues to the attention of the relevant branches and continues to offer support to all branches to enable them to meet the new requirement to record all budgets on the OLBA system.

■ Income and RMS

Total income returned to Head Office increased to £4,219,992. This represents a 5.3% increase on the previous year.

Total income returned to branches for 2018 increased to £1,049,438. This represents a 6.8% increase on the previous year.

■ Premises

Galway House: Work is underway with HQ on proposals for the fit out of Galway House. A positive outcome will enable us to develop the UNISON College and open a 'drop in' centre. We continue to host a series of events for lay structures, partner organisations and external users. This has included:

- Four Seasons
- NI Migrant Centre
- NI Anti Poverty Network
- Royal College of Occupational Therapists
- PPR
- NI Housing Executive

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

The Migrant Centre continues to base its North West operation in our Derry premises as part of their partnership arrangements.

Once the fit out of Galway House is complete, Regional Committee recommends a long term strategy for the Derry premises.

■ Environmental sustainability

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

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

■ Administrative systems and front-line communication

In-house systems and protocols: The UNISON IT system is in continuous development as it adapts to meet our changing needs. A new communications platform is currently being developed. Hardware is currently being replaced across the whole union as part of the updating programme. In response to the issues raised by members and activists in the 2 core Regional Council Reviews we are amending and adapting our systems and protocols to best meet their needs.

Websites and social media: This year we have made some changes to our website to keep the homepage up to date and improve user experience.

We have introduced a rolling banner to the homepage which displays images from current events and campaigns that can bring the user directly to related pages within the website. The homepage also links to a digital version of our Annual Report and a digital version of our free Member Learning Programme.

The news section of our website is updated several times throughout the week with

information and photos from events we have organised or supported. We have also incorporated Google Analytics into our website to get a better understanding of usage. In the year from August 2018 – August 2019 we have had almost 17,000 users.



Our social media channels continue to be a useful tool when communicating with our members. We have 5,598 likes on our main UNISON Facebook page, compared with 4,788 last year. Our branches have also increased their presence on social media in 2019, sharing news and photos from campaigns, demos and events.

Twitter continues to act as a useful platform for engaging with other organisations and sharing photos from events on the go. We have increased our number of followers on Twitter to 2,493, up from 2,200 last year.

This year we have also set up an Instagram account for UNISON NI. This tool allows us to share photos and videos with a wide-reaching audience, and engage with people beyond our membership.

E-communication with branches and members: Our database of up to date email addresses and phone numbers for members continues to grow, and we regularly send out information to our members by text and email.

Distribution and print: The Regional Centre in Belfast maintains a service for branches to circulate newsletters during AGM season.

■ Staffing

Regional Committee records its thanks to all our staff for all their work throughout 2018/2019.

We extend thanks and farewell to Janette Loughlin, while welcoming Sharrona Loughins back from her maternity leave.

Fighting Fund and Organising Fund: The majority of branches individually, or in combination, made successful bids to the 2018/2019 Fighting Fund enabling us to appoint 11 local organisers for the duration of the projects.

Our current staff team is:

Administration

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

Specialist Staff

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

Regional Management Team

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

Organising

- Marianne Buick - Regional Organiser (Temporary)
- Fidelma Carolan - Regional Organiser Education
- Nuala Conlon - Regional Organiser
- Nathalie Donnelly - Local Organiser
- Brian Ferguson - Regional Organiser
- Danielle McCusker - Area Organiser
- Joe McCusker - Regional Organiser
- Susan Neill - Area Organiser
- Caitlin NiChathail - Area Organiser

Fighting Fund Local Organisers

- Noeleen Beattie
- Claire Bolt
- Deirdre Cousins
- Gemma Curran
- Sean Fairley
- James Larmour
- Angela Gribben
- Jenny Johnston
- Orlaith McCarthy
- Janet Orr
- Noreen Robinson

Tribute to Catherine Friel



7 May 1957 - 14 June 2019

On 14th June 2019 Cath Friel, our Regional Education Officer (retired) and former NEC member for Scotland, passed away in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Glasgow following a long illness.

Cath was a long time UNISON activist and joined the staff of UNISON NI in 2000. During her 15 years with us, Cath was part of one of the most successful education and learning programmes in the union.

Cath was a vibrant part of the whole UNISON staff team but her real strength lay in the lasting relationships and friendships she formed with hundreds of UNISON activists and members.

She returned to Scotland in 2015 upon her retirement. Cath was held in such high regard that many of her former colleagues travelled regularly to her hospital bedside to keep her spirits up and to let her know that we were thinking about her.

Cath made many friends during her time in NI and she will be much missed by all of us.

UNION BUILDING
EQUALITY
PARTNERSHIP
PEACE
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