

# Growing a stronger union

NEC annual report 2018/19



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## Foreword

In the past year, our union has rightly celebrated the achievements of our first 25 years. Together, we have so much to be proud of. A proud union of the left—fighting and winning for working people. The biggest union in the UK, representing 1.3 million people working for the benefit of our communities.

We led the fight for a statutory minimum wage, against opposition from employers and even some in the trade union movement. We won that fight—and now we lead the fight for a real living wage for all. We were the union that led the fight against the Trade Union Act—taking on and defeating some of its worst excesses. We were the first union to back Jeremy Corbyn’s campaign for Labour leader—and work with him to put UNISON policies into the Labour manifesto. And we’ve repeatedly taken on the government over Universal Credit—particularly the vindictive two-child limit and the needless five-week wait.

It took years of hard work—but we were the union which won the historic Employment Tribunal fees case at the Supreme Court. Thanks to UNISON, all working people have better access to justice—and the government saw what happens when they try and attack the rights of working people. They won’t get away with it on UNISON’s watch. And soon we will be back in the Supreme Court again, fighting to ensure that care workers who stay overnight with the vulnerable people they care for receive the pay they deserve for their work.

Fighting for pay decency is at the heart of everything we stand for as a union. For years the Tory government attacked public sector pay—yet it was our union that broke their vicious 1% public sector pay cap with our Pay Up Now campaign. Of course there’s so much more to do, so we’ll fight on for better funding for all public

services, until all UNISON members receive the wages you deserve.

That’s especially true—as a union with a million women members—when it comes to equal pay. We’ve helped tackle pay discrimination and will keep on doing so, through our new *Bridge the Gap* campaign, until there’s a genuinely level playing field for everyone.

On care, it’s our union which stands up for some of the most vital but lowest paid workers in our society. Dozens of councils have signed our Ethical Care Charter – ensuring decent pay and conditions for care workers and better care for those who need it most. Now through our *Let’s Change Care* campaign we’re working to recruit more care workers, fight for better pay and raise standards across the vital social care sector.

And whether we’re campaigning against mental health stigma, or providing the tools our members need to succeed through the incredible education and training we provide, it’s UNISON which cares about every aspect of our members’ lives, not just the hours you spend at work. That’s because, while we are proudly the biggest trade union in the UK, UNISON remains focussed on the lives and experiences of every single one of our members. Everything our union does starts and ends with our members—together, we can achieve so much.



**Dave Prentis**  
General Secretary



**Gordon McKay**  
President

## Chapter one: Going for growth

UNISON has had a relentless focus on recruitment and organising over the past decade. We've had to. The long years of the government's austerity agenda with continuing year-on-year cuts to public service jobs and budgets have hit our union hard.

**1** So it was a particularly proud moment when, in our 25th anniversary year, UNISON officially became the UK's largest union. This is a credit to our activists, organising staff and our ongoing recruitment campaign, all of which have helped to make UNISON such a strong recruiting union.

**2** UNISON maintained a growth in recruitment numbers for 2018 with 168,469 new members recruited to UNISON—a 9% year-on-year increase.

**3** But while we've recruited strongly, UNISON has nevertheless seen a small but continuing net loss of members year on year over the last decade—reflecting high churn rates amid the continuing turmoil and job losses in our key public services. Taking both recruiting and membership loss together, the trajectory over that period has been one of slow but continuing small declines in membership, but this had started to slow down.

**4** So in 2018, there was an opportunity to see whether, through concerted effort across the union, we could turn the trend around altogether and tip the union into genuine growth for the first time in many years.

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### Grovember

**5** Taking the slowdown in membership loss as an opportunity, UNISON launched Grovember, a month-long recruitment and retention push aimed at putting the union squarely back into overall growth.

**6** The ambition was to focus the whole union—national, regional and branch level—on recruitment and retention during this one period of time. Part of the strategy was to test the theory of the 'aggregation of marginal gains'—dissecting our recruitment and retention into small pockets of specific activity and seeing whether small improvements in each of these could add up to a measurable difference in our performance. We wanted people to try new things and test different approaches.

**7** All regions produced detailed plans for their month of focused and integrated activity. To support this, the usual recruitment marketing campaign was extended to cover November.

**8** Every branch was contacted with an offer of support from the centre or regions and new digital tools were trialled to support on-the-ground organising.

**9** To support better retention of our members, we introduced automated welcome emails for all online joiners—giving them an immediate and warm welcome to UNISON and introducing them to their branches. And to reward our current members, a raft of special deals, discounts and offers were introduced and rapidly became the most popular page on our website.

**10** A national recruit-a-friend competition helped encourage members to recruit new members and a branch noticeboard competition ensured every branch could take part in this simple single action to increase their visibility in the workplace.

**11** We used social media advertising expertise at the centre in conjunction with regional organising plans to support specific local campaigns in social care.

**12** And we piloted both welcome phonecalls to new joiners and calls to potential lapsed members.

**13** And the result of all this activity was 18,100 new joiners in November, compared to 12,380 leavers. Every region and every service group saw net growth. This meant the union grew by 5,720 members in November alone and we ended the year with an annual net growth of 6,220.

**14** Alongside a lot of small scale learning about what worked well and what was less successful, the key lesson was that by working together across the whole union, we can buck the trend of trade union membership and achieve real growth. At the time of writing, the union is gearing up for a fresh spring growth campaign in May.

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### Join online

**15** With growing numbers choosing to join the union online, it is more important than ever to make sure this way into the union is easy, welcoming and designed around the joiner.

**16** With this in mind, we carried out a review and optimisation of our online joining system resulting in a major overhaul of the process. This included new landing pages for the joining process and a more mobile-friendly design. Every element was tested over a three month period and optimised according to what worked best for joiners.

**17** The join online process is now more welcoming, takes half as long to complete and has improved overall accessibility. As a result of this we've seen improved conversion rates and more people joining the union.

**18** Since November 2018, all online joiners now receive a tailored automated welcome email once they complete the join online form and once again when they are allocated to a branch to welcome them and sign post them to their branch.

**19** This package of work has resulted in a marked rise to 75% of joiners now choosing to join online either directly or with the assistance of an activist or member of staff. Additionally opt in rates to the campaign fund, equality monitoring and communication consents are far higher for online joiners as is overall satisfaction in the joining experience.

**20** To combine the benefits of the new joining experience and the skills of activists and members of staff, a simple online tool, Easy Joiner was piloted as part of the Grovember campaign. This tool enabled anybody to recruit a potential member by capturing their email address. The potential member was then sent reminder emails to join UNISON online when it suited them and kept the original recruiter up to date with progress. The objective is to make recruiting members more accessible for everyone to participate in, making UNISON more environmentally friendly and joining easier for those in a hurry.

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## Strategic organising

**21** Innovation in organising and recruitment wasn't confined to a single month of activity, no matter how successful. UNISON continues to develop fresh ways to reach out to workers providing public services. This year, our strategic organising programme has included:

### Mobile organising units

**22** Across the union we are seeing the emergence of mobile organising units. From small vans organising in schools in the Eastern region to larger vehicles, with office areas and Wifi, organising around care homes in East Lothian Health branch in Scotland.

**23** The units are a unique way to bring the union directly to the more fragmented and sometimes privatised workplaces. The organising vehicles provide great visibility for the union, often in hard-to-reach and rural areas. When they are parked outside a workplace there is no doubt that UNISON is here!

### Resource centres

**24** Branches in a number of regions have joined together to open new resource centres over the last year in order to unify resources, administrative tasks, casework and training needs.

**25** The centres have hired administrative staff and organisers. This has enabled them to be more efficient and has liberated much-needed time, focus and resources to grow and organise.

**26** These resource centres have been set up to address the growing need to organise and provide a service for workers in fragmented workplaces where the traditional workplace branch model has not worked. Other "shop front" style offices have re-vitalised their function to house successful ongoing organising projects in the private sector, including in social care and academies. As a consequence, the strategic organising unit has supported these branches and regions with direct training, mentorship and financial support to furnish the centres where possible. These resource centres have been used for campaign planning meetings, community meetings, worker consultations, individual casework, training sessions and public walks-ins.

### Migrants organising in a hostile environment

**27** Sadly, this year has lent a particular importance to UNISON's strategy of supporting organising among migrant workers in the UK. Thousands of migrants, including UNISON migrant members, continue to suffer from the government's "hostile environment". The referendum vote for the UK to exit the European Union has unleashed many racist attacks against migrants in both their communities and workplaces.

**28** One of the largest concentrations of migrant workers in the UK is in public services. The numerous issues affecting migrants have given UNISON many opportunities to engage with migrant workers.

**29** The strategic organising unit provides support to at least 20 branches across the regions, which have been encouraged to set up migrants organising projects. In these workplaces, migrant members are organising collectively to address issues like bullying and harassment as well as the sort of institutional discrimination that

denies career development opportunities for many employees from a migrant background.

**30** UNISON migrant networks are being organised by migrant activists to strengthen their ability to deal with these issues. Where there are migrant worker organising projects, membership from migrant workers has increased and the number of migrant stewards and activists has increased, with migrants taking roles as branch officers, including as branch secretaries and chairs.

**31** Jade, is now a fully-fledged branch steward, organising a migrants' network. She says: *"I was very vocal with my colleagues about the need to join the union after my own ordeal. I am honoured and thrilled to be a UNISON rep. My work as an efficient professional nurse will go hand in hand with being a passionate UNISON representative."*

**32** Overseas nurses are the largest number of migrant employees recruited by the NHS in order to fill 40,000 vacancies across the country. Campaigns organised and won in NHS Trusts on issues such as the adaptation of nursing qualifications for overseas nurses, or on pay and contractual conditions have seen an increase in membership and activism among overseas nurses.

**33** Lucia, one of the EU nurses leading the migrants' network says: *"With UNISON's guidance, we were able to understand our rights and fight for them. At first I felt very depressed because I felt alone, now I am empowered as I can see many of us working together to address our problems."*

## European Union citizens

**34** UNISON has an estimated 80,000 EU citizens as members. They have engaged in:

**35** *Campaigning:* to retain their rights post EU Exit and make sure that the new immigration status—called EU Settled Status—is non discriminatory. We organised a mass lobby of Parliament on 5 November with members forming a human chain between Parliament Square and 10 Downing Street to deliver a letter to Theresa May demanding full protection of rights whatever the outcome of the EU Exit negotiations.

**36** Continuous pressure on the government from our members and campaigning groups such as the3million has secured a couple of victories. The government announced the removal of the application fees for the EU Settled Status scheme on 21 January and on 27 March, MPs voted unanimously for the Costa Amendment, meaning Theresa May is writing to Donald Tusk and the

EU Heads of State, to ask them to instruct the European Commission to implement the part of the withdrawal agreement about citizens' rights, regardless of the outcome of the EU Exit negotiations on everything else.

**37** *Training:* We currently have a network of 150 European contacts and activists. We ran three national training events this year with the3million and Hope Not Hate to raise interest in the campaign but also to get our members to organise in their workplace, branch and region as well as engage with other community groups.

**38** *Organising:* In autumn 2018, public sector organisations and unions including UNISON took part in two pilots to help assess and develop the new digital application for Settled Status. We produced an information leaflet to explain the scheme and how to prepare for the application.

## Private sector recruitment

**39** UNISON has continued to prioritise two major companies, Sodexo and Compass, as organising targets to build private sector growth and strength. Organisers are on their second year of a three-year organising campaign to work with branches and regions throughout the country to help build membership and a strong activist base within each company.

**40** In Compass, we continue to work with regions and branches on organising key sites where we can make an impact on workers. In addition to recruitment, we have prioritised developing activists and reps to increase UNISON's visibility within this often-neglected workforce in both the health and education sectors. We are also working to create structures of sustainability and cooperation within branches to integrate both directly-employed and outsourced workers.

**41** In July, UNISON launched a new national campaign focused on giving all NHS workers (whether employed by the NHS or working for the NHS but employed by a private company) the nationally-negotiated pay rise. We are campaigning and organising on our sites where the pay rise has not been extended to private sector workers, with the pay deal being implemented locally in some places. Recent successes and industrial action in both Compass and Sodexo has inspired our private contractor workers in schools, hospitals and universities across the UK to formally pursue better terms and conditions.

**42** The strategic organising unit has been supporting the North West and Yorkshire & Humberside regions in organising and recruiting Sodexo members in the private sector. The most recent campaign was to force Sodexo to pay the 2018 NHS Pay Framework Agreement to those

employed on Agenda for Change terms and conditions at Wythenshawe Hospital. Members campaigned together and successfully won the NHS pay deal in full, backdated to April 2018.

**43** We have successfully secured the full NHS pay deal for Sodexo workers in Hereford County Hospital and North Devon District Hospital and are now campaigning to secure the same deal for Sodexo workers in Stoke Mandeville Hospital.

**44** We are developing a group of Sodexo stewards, some of whom have taken up various branch posts and will help to build sustainable structures for the union. Some of these stewards are active on the national Sodexo forum and on the private contractors forum.

### Activist education

**45** Training figures for the key activist roles—stewards, health and safety reps and union learning reps (ULRs)—held up well in 2018. The number of reps trained to ERA level (accredited as capable of acting as a workers' companion under the terms of the Employment Relations Act) fell slightly, but when the number of stewards who attended stage 1 and who will go onto stage 2 during 2019, is included, then the training of new stewards is doing well. Health and safety rep training was slightly down compared to 2017 but ULR training was up.

	Stage 1	ERA-Accredited	H & S reps	ULRs
Courses run	43	161	47	15
Numbers trained	449	1945	441	128

**46** The revamped ERA refresher course was rolled out in 2018 and seems to be working well with 686 reps attending this training—up for the third year running.

**47** Last year saw an increase in the number of activists attending advanced skills and other activist training. Some 1,084 activists attended an advanced skills course and 3,860 activists attended other training on topics ranging from discrimination law to speaking with confidence.

**48** In 2018, the learning and organising services team completely overhauled the Trained and Active resource. Together with the introduction of the Stage 1 steward course and the new *Activate!* e-note, Trained and Active forms part of a much clearer pathway to support and develop contacts and members into activist positions and support the union's strategy to grow our activist base.

**49** Key to this strategy is the need to recruit and train more branch education coordinators, lifelong learning coordinators and union learning reps, these roles are pivotal in supporting activists whether its building skills and confidence to ensuring that experienced activists attend advanced training. 2018 saw a concerted effort in most regions to recruit and develop these roles. A number of events were held to achieve this, including a seminar in September which examined the needs of the skills that activists need.

**50** A commemorative magazine, *Celebrating 25 Years of Growing the Union Through Learning* showcasing some of the fantastic learning achievements over the first 25 years of the union was launched during Adult Learners Week.

**51** We are continuing to develop our e-learning capacity for activists and members. New e-notes launched in 2018 included an overview of GDPR and data protection legislation for UNISON activists; an introduction to the role of the branch treasurer and an updated introduction to the role of the branch welfare officer. *Activate!*, a new e-note targeted at contacts and potential activists, was launched in the spring of 2019.

**52** During 2018 the learning and organising services team worked with regions, service groups and national departments to pilot new training materials and resources to empower our activists, including a one-day *Challenging Racism in the Workplace* course, *Closing the Gender Pay Gap*, *Women and Pensions*, *Grovember* and *Changes to the Political Fund*.

**53** The UNISON Leadership School 2018 ran in July and brought together 45 lay members and staff from across UNISON. Participants explored how UNISON might respond to the challenges and radically changing environment of the landscape of work and society over the next 10 years.

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### Union Learning Fund

**54** UNISON continues to work successfully across England, Scotland and Cymru/Wales with the Union Learning Fund (ULF). Different funding arrangements exist in Northern Ireland but generally the access to funding enables UNISON to support some of our lowest-paid and hard-to-reach members, access non-members and gain recognition with employers.

**55** In Scotland over 190 courses have been run over the last two years, with approximately 2,300 learners participating in one or more of 33 different workshops.



The projects have focused on the health and social care sector and schools/early years sectors.

**56** In Cymru/Wales, the ULF projects have concentrated on improving the skills of support staff working in schools, health care support workers and the fragmented, mainly social care workforce delivering public services.

**57** Northern Ireland's flagship project, *K101: An introduction to health and social care* has enabled hundreds of workers to benefit from wraparound skills support sessions which help them to prepare for studying the Level 1. An extensive member learning programme is delivered, with over 1,400 members attending a range of courses in 2018.

**58** In England, the ULF project has almost tripled its size in the last three years. During 2018 the project engaged with over 14,000 learners, ran 178 dissemination and networking events, where 37,852 individuals have benefited from some form of information related to learning.

**59** The work with service groups remains integral to the ULF priorities, for example: work is currently underway with the health group to support members, as part of the NHS pay deal, to acquire skills to facilitate the move from band 1 to 2.

**60** The ULF project continues to support thousands of apprentices, during 2018, 1,149 apprentices engaged in learning activity from attending courses such as *Your skills*, *Your Future* to taking part in short online training. A range of new resources and materials were developed including a new course on mentoring apprentices.



## Chapter two: Speaking up for our members

We speak up for our members whether that is at work, in Parliament, the devolved institutions or on the global stage. Austerity remains a political choice wherever it is made at the local, national or international level. We aim to put our members' voice at the heart of our collective campaigning using the full weight of the union at every level.

**61** Sometimes we lead campaigns and sometimes we work in coalition with other organisations and sister unions. The NEC constantly makes those judgements about the best way to advance the interests of UNISON members, working with all the TUCs and the UNISON political funds, and will devolve campaign decisions and resources to UNISON regions, where appropriate.

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### Campaigning for women

#### Bridge the Gap

**62** UNISON is uniquely placed to be the voice of women in public services on the gender pay gap. Gender pay reporting came into force in April 2018 for UK organisations with 250 employees or more.

**63** A new campaign, *Bridge the Gap*, aims to raise members' awareness of the gender pay reporting regulations and, by being seen as a champion for closing the gap, reinforcing UNISON's place as the union with a million women members.

**64** Negotiating guidance for branches was launched in April 2019 to coincide with the first anniversary of gender pay gap reporting.

**65** International Women's Day 2019 provided an opportunity to trail the launch of our negotiating guidance introducing new, bold branding for the campaign and a film and a blog from the general secretary demonstrating UNISON's commitment for action to bridge the gender pay gap.

**66** We are surveying our activists to measure the level of awareness about gender pay gap issues in organisations—whether there are action plans and whether there is union involvement. This will give UNISON a baseline data set to measure progress in reducing the gender pay gap in public service employers in future years.

**67** Training for branches/activists will be designed and delivered from summer 2019.

**68** UNISON is discussing with political parties, and in particular, Labour MP Stella Creasy, how we can work together to improve gender pay gap reporting, including making reporting mandatory, introducing more stringent and standardised reporting requirements, legislative changes such as enhancing parental and carer's leave to facilitate working conditions that help close the gap and clear guidance from the Westminster government about actions employers could take to reduce the gap.

#### Combining working and caring—still a women's issue

**69** UNISON is aware that despite many improvements in flexible working, for many people balancing work and care can still feel almost impossible.

**70** This is a gendered issue because, despite many more men taking up caring responsibilities, caring is still predominantly done by women.

**71** This year UNISON undertook some research with the Coram Children's Charity to investigate the issues that make the barriers that are still impacting so much on families trying to balance working and caring.

**72** Perhaps not surprisingly, what made the most impact was to have a supportive and flexible employer. But many employers don't understand how to offer that support and we recognised that government also has a role to play in championing support to stop staff dropping out of work and careers when caring responsibilities arise.

**73** The survey work among our own members reinforced that giving up a job, a career, and social networks is something most workers want to avoid. Falling out of work because of caring responsibilities is no good for the employee or the wider economy and it appears that some relatively small changes would support carers to stay in work.

**74** The measures suggested by the research are quite modest—recognising the value of having a carers policy, a couple of weeks paid carers leave, accessible in days or even half days, to manage appointments as well as emergencies and access to a period of temporary unpaid leave to cover an emerging carers issue.

**75** This research feeds into UNISON's work on reducing the gender pay gap and will form part of subsequent negotiating advice for activists.

### Sexual harassment

**76** UNISON has led the way in addressing harassment at work but sexual harassment remains all too common. The #MeToo campaign has transformed the debate around sexual harassment but the issue affects women in ordinary work places as well as in the world of media celebrities.

**77** A new UNISON project aims to examine the extent of sexual harassment in the sectors where we represent members. The healthcare service group is developing a questionnaire to ask members about their experiences of inappropriate sexual behaviour at work. Initial findings will be reported in June at a national delegate conference fringe meeting.

### Women and pensions

**78** UNISON continues to campaign and support various WASPI (women against state pension inequality) groups across the UK in campaigning against the injustice faced by women born in the 1950's and the lack of notice from the government in raising the state pension age.

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## 2019—the Year of the Young Worker

**79** Last year UNISON's national delegate conference agreed to make 2019 the *Year of the Young Worker*, with the aim of pulling the entire union—not just members under 27—together around key aims of recruiting, organising and developing young members and activists. The TUC later adopted 2019 as the *Year of the Young Worker* too.

**80** The year has so far seen the launch of a new range of materials aimed at young workers, promotional activities across the union's social media and communications—including special editions of U magazine and Activist magazine focused on young members—social media “takeovers” and a union-wide organising approach.

**81** Regional young members' groups have launched a number of exciting and innovative campaigns including:

- mental health (Scotland region)
- sexual harassment (Eastern region)
- Young Workers' Charter (Cymru/Wales and South West regions).

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## Public service pay and funding cuts

**82** The cross-service group *Pay Up Now* campaign has proved a popular umbrella under which all service groups have been able to organise around pay. The campaign has generated a considerable amount of engagement, both nationally as well as in regions and branches.

**83** In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, UNISON developed specific campaigns reflecting the political and governance structures in those countries, while the UK campaign has focussed on lobbying and influencing the political debate on pay.

**84** Over the past year there has been a particular focus on service groups which are not in multi-year agreements.

**85** In future, it is clear that consistent improvement in pay offers in all sectors will require not only the willingness of government and employers to pay public service workers better, but also increased public sector funding following years of austerity.

**86** With that in mind, UNISON's pay campaigning is evolving to encompass the fight for better funding for public services—of which better pay is an integral part. The Spending Review in November 2019 will be a key campaign target.

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## Public service campaigning

**87** During the party conference season UNISON published a report, *We Can't Go On Like This*, to highlight the impact of cuts on support staff across public services. The report was based on a member survey and analysis of Office for National Statistics jobs data. The report was used to support our engagement work with politicians and achieved widespread coverage in the media.

**88** Key recommendations were for:

- a new deal on government funding in our public services
- government to work with unions and employers to ensure that public services lead by example on the decent work agenda
- improved access to training for support staff and
- a renewed commitment on the part of employers to engage with unions.

## NHS 70th birthday celebrations

**89** Funded by the union's Campaign Fund, UNISON was involved in a wide variety of activities to mark the 70th anniversary of the formation of the NHS, using the theme *Celebrate and Defend*.

**90** Most prominently, the union was the main funder of the 30 June march and demonstration in London, co-organised by the TUC, Health Campaigns Together and the People's Assembly. It was a well-attended occasion and featured prominently in the news before, during and after the event. UNISON President Gordon McKay addressed the rally on Whitehall and UNISON members from the Wigan subco strike featured prominently on the march.

**91** There was a similar event in Belfast, organised by UNISON Northern Ireland, which was also well-attended and featured marches from the Royal Victoria Hospital, the Mater Hospital and Writers' Square to Belfast City Hall.

**92** The union produced a range of materials for use at the demonstrations in London and Belfast but also for other events. Branches from all four nations organised events on the anniversary or shortly afterwards, including giant birthday cards, recruitment events and political stunts.

**93** On the day itself, high-profile UNISON advertising appeared prominently in the *Metro* and on news websites—emphasising the link between the union and the NHS.

**94** UNISON also sprinkled a little stardust on the occasion by bringing together Aneira Thomas, the first baby born on the NHS, with her hero, Hollywood star Michael Sheen, for a special interview.

**95** The union worked with the Aneurin Bevan Society to put on events in Tredegar (Bevan's birthplace) and at Westminster.

**96** The Bevan Society also produced a series of films with UNISON's support featuring interviews with all surviving leaders of the Labour Party, introduced by Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

**97** At Prime Minister's Questions on 27 June, Labour MPs, including Jeremy Corbyn and other frontbenchers, could be seen wearing the union's *NHS 70 Celebrate and Defend* badges. This was used to build support for the forthcoming demo, to highlight the dangers faced by the NHS and to associate the union with the birthday.

## Elections 2019 and UNISON in Westminster

### Elections

**98** Local elections took place across a number of local authorities in England in May 2019. UNISON continued with its practice of making materials available to encourage people to ensure they are registered to vote and apply for a postal vote if away on polling day. Many regions and Labour Link activists took part in local campaigns. The results were not known at the time of writing.

### Labour Link

**99** The Labour Link committee continues to promote UNISON members' interests inside the Labour Party and in Parliament to oppose the government's ongoing attacks on public services and those that provide them.

**100** UNISON members elected as MPs meet with Labour Link both individually and collectively to work on the union's priorities. Labour MPs continue to attend Westminster Hall debates, support Early Day Motions and ask questions regarding the union's concerns. Two UNISON-backed campaigns that resulted in new legislation being passed by Parliament were the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act and the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act following strong support from Labour MPs.

**101** UNISON continues to work with the Labour shadow cabinet, police and crime commissioners and elected Labour mayors to call for increased political accountability for probation services and to end the disastrous privatisation of the service.

**102** Working with Labour's team in Parliament, a successful lobby regarding cuts in local government was held in the run up to the budget and there has been active support from Labour MPs for a number of high profile industrial disputes the union has been involved in during the last year.

**103** In Wales levy payers were balloted in support of Mark Drakeford, for leader of the Labour Party in Wales, who has become First Minister. In Scotland, Labour Link continues to play a key role in policy development and has welcomed new commitments regarding public transport.

**104** Labour Link continues to support members who wish to become councillors or parliamentarians with training and advice and a number of UNISON members have been selected to stand in target seats at the next general election.

**105** Labour Link has participated fully in the Labour Party's democracy review and has been clear that the union's voice must be maintained at all levels within the party.

## Exiting the EU

**106** UNISON continued to work with its key alliances: Brexit Civil Service Alliance, the3million, Cavendish Coalition, Trade Justice Movement, Labour Party, MEPs, MPs and peers and EPSU, ETUC, TUC, STUC, WTUC and ITUC to ensure that any future EU-UK deal must match the benefits that we have now with the EU and not leave working people in the UK worse off.

### Securing a good deal for workers

**107** UNISON supported the campaign to vote against the Westminster government's Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration. It fell short of providing substantive guarantees that UK workers' rights and standards would not be weakened by future UK government legislation. The political declaration opened up the options of a possible future EU-UK Free Trade Agreement which UNISON said was a recipe for more de-regulation and liberalisation of public services.

**108** UNISON pressed for the extension of Article 50 so that Parliament could have more time to deliver a better deal that ruled out No Deal and a future EU-UK Free Trade Agreement as these are inherently more risky for UNISON members' workers' rights and the future of public services than any other deal option.

**109** UNISON's NEC agreed that any new EU-UK deal should meet six tests:

1. Protect existing health and safety and workers' rights through a level playing field of regulations, with a non-regression clause, dynamic alignment mechanism, an enforcement mechanism and accessible dispute mechanism that enforces the adherence and future upgrade of these rights.
2. Protect public services from a bad economic deal that will prevent growth of the UK economy, continue public service austerity instead of increased funding, lower living standards and offer less training and skills opportunities for workers.
3. Keep UK public services out of global trade deals, maintain only the existing beneficial social provisions in public procurement regulations, expand the right to public ownership and the positive use of state aid.
4. Safeguard rights, standards and regulations (eg employment, environmental, consumer and climate change) and any new EU measures in the future so that they cannot be weakened in the UK through any future trade deals with non-EU countries like the USA.
5. Maintain existing equality and human rights, EU citizen rights and EU freedom of movement.
6. Prevent a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, uphold the Good Friday Agreement and respect the devolution legislation of the Governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

### Protecting health and social care services after Brexit

**110** UNISON has campaigned to make sure that Brexit does not damage health and social care services due to staff shortages arising from EU workers not applying for jobs or leaving jobs due to the uncertainty of the Brexit negotiations.

**111** A report by the Cavendish Coalition, which UNISON is a member of, found that the NHS could be short of 51,000 nurses, enough to staff 45 hospitals, by the end of the Brexit transition period. The social care sector cannot survive without workers from EU countries working in its teams. Between 2011 and 2016, the number of EU nationals employed in social care grew by 68%, or 30,600 people. The social care sector is under considerable constraint strain with a vacancy rate of 12.3%.

**112** If we do not solve this social care crisis the knock-on effects to the NHS will be enormous. People who are best cared for in their homes or in the community will instead be forced to visit already over-crowded hospitals, putting yet more strain on the system.

**113** UNISON raised grave concerns about the Migration Advisory Committee's recommendations to the government to include a £30,000 a year minimum threshold in its post-Brexit migration plans. This will limit the crucial source of valued social care colleagues.

### Making Settled Status work for EU citizens in the UK

**114** The NEC worked with branches to assist UNISON EU members in the Settled Status pilots and produced guidance and information about the government's introduction of Settled Status both for branches and EU members.

**115** UNISON branches also began to successfully campaign and negotiate for public service employers to pay the new settled status fee. Before the government



waived the fee UNISON had got over 55 employers recorded as agreeing to pay the fees.

**116** UNISON supported the campaign with the 3million to win an amendment, passed unanimously in the House of Commons to ringfence EU citizens' rights regardless of the outcome of the Brexit negotiations.

### Protecting the Good Friday Agreement

**117** The NEC worked closely with UNISON Northern Ireland in its campaign to protect the Good Friday Agreement in the Brexit negotiations. UNISON raised the unique circumstances and issues involved in the meaningful vote discussions to prevent Parliament from weakening or dismissing the need for the protections of a 'backstop' in the government's withdrawal agreement.

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## International

**118** UNISON continued to play a leading role in Public Services International (PSI) and the European federation of Public Services Unions (EPSU). Nationally, our four international priorities were Colombia, Palestine, Turkey and for the first time *Business and Human Rights*.

**119** With regard to Colombia, UNISON worked with Justice for Colombia (JfC) to highlight the continued failure of the Colombian authorities to properly implement the 2016 Peace Agreement. We took part in a JfC mission to monitor the agreement in August 2018 and condemned the high rate of killings of leaders from peasant farmer and environmental organisations, the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities and demobilised former FARC combatants.

**120** UNISON has actively supported the campaign for the release of child prisoners detained by the Israeli military in the West Bank, following policy passed at national delegate conference 2018. We have supported Palestine Solidarity Campaign rallies, marches and other actions in response to the massacre of protestors participating in the Great March of Return. UNISON continues to take a leading role in the development of the European Trade Union Network for Justice for Palestine, bringing together trade unions across Europe to campaign for Palestinian rights.

**121** Despite the official end of the state of emergency in July 2018, the government of Turkey has continued to erode democracy, human and workers' rights and the rule of law. UNISON has continued to campaign for the release of trade unionists, human rights activists and political prisoners and the reinstatement of over 152,000 public service workers, dismissed during the state of

emergency. We have produced a campaign briefing for branches on workers' and human rights in Turkey, and further developed our links with Turkish unions, including through a delegation and support for the ETUC/ITUC solidarity fund. We have repeatedly demanded that the UK government call on the government of Turkey to respect human and workers rights.

**122** UNISON has developed an innovative four-year programme on ethical public procurement to tackle exploitation and modern slavery in goods global supply chains. With an aim to develop a social partnership ethical public procurement model, it will inspire and build a new generation of skilled ethical procurement activists to act in this area. The local government service group will be our year one pilot, for which Campaign Fund money has been won, but all service groups will eventually be covered.

**123** UNISON has played a central role developing a UK civil society working group to advocate for a binding treaty on transnational corporations with respect to human rights that is being negotiated at the United Nations, including taking a shadow Labour minister to the October negotiations, and has contributed to planning and launching a new long-term campaign to advocate for a mandatory human rights due diligence law. Related, a small delegation visited UNISON's project in Qatar to see how Philippine migrant workers' are being trained and organised to claim their rights and the big impact the Play Fair campaign and subsequent cooperation with the Qatari government has had.

**124** A delegation composed of members of the NEC and regional representatives visited Cuba at the end of 2018 which met with the health and public administration unions as well as the national trade union centre, the CTC.

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## Universal Credit

**125** UNISON has continued to exert influence on policy and decisions on Universal Credit, personal independence payments and social security reforms through written evidence to the work and pensions select committee and the social security advisory committee, lobbying MPs and peers in advance of key decisions, using press releases, blogs and social media to keep the issues high on the political agenda.

**126** A dedicated campaign page on our website highlights current live issues around Universal Credit—for example the five-week wait, the two-child limit, deductions, or the lack of transitional protection for people who start on universal credit because their circumstances change.

UNISON alerted 100,000 members over 60 to the change to Pension Credit that took place on 15 May 2019, so they could make sure they weren't losing out.

**127** The £1,000/year increase in work allowances for families with children and people with disabilities, the decision to abandon the retrospective application of the two child limit retrospectively and the decision to delay moving people on legacy benefits to universal credit are all evidence that the strategy is yielding some progress.

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## Windrush and the hostile environment

**128** UNISON has long warned the government that its 'hostile environment' policies would lead to devastating consequences for the UK's settled Black communities. This sadly came to pass in the Windrush scandal. UNISON believes that the government should have anticipated the risks to the Windrush generation from the measures put in place by the Immigration Act 2014 and 2016. A clause dating back to 1999 protecting long-standing Commonwealth residents was deleted from the 2014 Immigration Act. Thousands of Commonwealth citizens found themselves targeted for deportation, made homeless and denied vital public services such as healthcare. There is a fear that a Windrush type of scandal could happen to other groups of citizens and UNISON has made this point to various parliamentary committees.

**129** *UNISON member Michael Braithwaite, who came to the UK as a nine-year-old as part of the Windrush generation, was asked by the Home Office for documentation to cover every single one of the 56 years he has legally lived in the UK. He was kept in excruciating limbo, at great cost to his health, his family and his job. Despite having worked as a special needs teaching assistant for over 15 years he felt traumatised and humiliated by his treatment at the hands of the Home Office and his employer. UNISON was proud to support Michael, but his experience is emblematic of the Windrush scandal—showing the inhumanity of government policies.*

**130** At the time of writing, the Home Office has yet to open the long-promised compensation scheme or report back on the lessons learned review. UNISON made substantial submissions to both the scheme consultation and the review's call for evidence. We believe that the delays in compensating those who have suffered add insult to injury and will continue campaigning for justice to be done.

**131** Throughout the past year, UNISON has continued lobbying, campaigning and intervening on all aspects

of this government agenda, from the plight of Windrush citizens to migrant workers being affected by the hostile environment, to submitting evidence to Parliament, ministers and civil servants. UNISON has also made public and private interventions to support members who are being adversely affected by Home Office decisions.

**132** Resources for branches and members campaigning and organising around these issues are now available ([www.unison.org.uk/standtogether](http://www.unison.org.uk/standtogether)), including new workshops focused on engaging with difficult conversations and community organising.

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## Privatisation

**133** UNISON has focused on protecting members faced with the failure of major outsourcing companies during 2018/19. Fifteen months after the collapse of Carillion, the spotlight is now on Interserve and its 68,000 employees.

**134** And in February Working Links, a probation and employment company owned by Aurelis, went into administration.

**135** Back in 2014, the government split the probation service in two as part of its so-called 'transforming rehabilitation' reforms. Half the workforce was transferred to 21 new Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), which were privatised, and the other half were transferred into the new National Probation Service. Working Links had three CRCs as subsidiaries.

**136** Government acknowledged that the contracts were failing and decided to end them two years early. According to the National Audit Office (NAO), additional costs of at least £467m will be incurred. Despite this, the Ministry of Justice is still planning to award more probation contracts to private firms.

**137** In March a very critical NAO report asked the government to pause its plans in light of the damage to services and costs to the taxpayer. UNISON's *Let's Fix Probation* campaign brought to light the experiences and concerns of probation staff members and called for the probation service to be reunited as a publicly-owned and locally-run service.

**138** UNISON's campaign has included evidence gathering and research into the impact of the reforms, lobbying parliament and campaigning to raise awareness with the general public. Working together with anti-privatisation campaigners, We Own It, a petition and video was launched and UNISON also created an eye-catching website to promote the petition <https://howmuchmoneyhaschrisgraylingwasted.org/>.

**139** Meanwhile, in the NHS, UNISON's ongoing campaign against the establishment of wholly-owned subsidiary companies or subcos by NHS Trusts in England, recorded a number of significant victories. Strong strike action at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh forced the trust to back down from plans to set up a subco in July 2018.

**140** Hot on the heels of that success Tees Esk and Wear Valley ditched its plans for a subco, while Leicester, Leeds, Mid York all retreated. A combination of threats of industrial action, political campaigning and media work helped turned the tide in UNISON's favour.

**141** A further strike by staff in Bolton against the failure of an existing subco to pay them the new Agenda for Change pay rates also resulted in victory in October 2018 when the trust agreed to pay staff the full three-year pay award.

**142** The combination of local action and national lobbying resulted in NHS Improvement calling a pause to any future plans to establish subcos in September 2018 with a subsequent consultation on what new guidance should be issued to trusts looking to set up subcos in the future.

**143** NHS Improvement published revised guidance for trusts on wholly-owned subsidiary companies at the end of 2018. The guidance did not go as far as UNISON wanted, but it did provide another tool for branches aiming to resist the imposition of new subsidiaries or changes to existing ones.

**144** In local government UNISON has been promoting insourcing and is preparing guidance for branches faced with the Future Model being promoted by Ignite which invariably results in 20% of the workforce being made redundant.

**145** UNISON's work with Panorama highlighted how at Bright Tribe the private sector was transferring work from academies to companies controlled by the sponsor's representative and how public funds were misappropriated.

**146** The Campaign Fund has made donations to the We Own it campaign group to promote public ownership to a new audience.

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## Living Wage

**147** The Living Wage has continued to form an integral part of most UNISON pay claims. Consequently, significant increases to bottom rates in the NHS and local government are estimated to have reduced the number

of directly-employed public sector staff earning below the Living Wage across our major bargaining groups by over 100,000—the biggest single shift of workers onto the Living Wage rate. As a result, sub-Living Wage rates are becoming ever more concentrated in those parts of the public services delivered by private contractors and community and voluntary organisations.

**148** UNISON developed a fresh set of campaigning materials and bargaining guidance to support branches and regions over Living Wage Week, when the new Living Wage rates were announced.

**149** Our evidence to the Low Pay Commission continued to make the case for raising the National Minimum Wage to the Living Wage rate and bringing both youth and apprentice rates up to the full adult rate. To support that case, research was commissioned from the New Policy Institute that built on last year's youth rate report to highlight the injustice faced by apprentices in the workplace.

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## Housing

**150** UNISON continues to lobby politicians for more housing that is affordable to our members and their families; and is campaigning to safeguard social housing and the workforce who deliver this essential public service.

**151** In May 2018, UNISON hosted a one-day seminar for our housing members, attended by John Healey MP. Our members revealed that austerity and cuts to housing investment have resulted in fewer social homes that can be accessed by workers on modest incomes—as well as a challenging work environment where teams have shrunk and housing workers are over-worked, with no extra pay.

**152** UNISON has published a number of reports on housing affordability and implications on public service workers, including *Priced Out: Home-ownership and public sector workers*, which was launched at the TUC conference in September 2018. The report showed that saving the money for a deposit on a property would take decades—or more than a century for many of our members in the majority of local authority areas in England, Scotland and Wales.

**153** UNISON works with campaign alliances, including Generation Rent's *End Unfair Evictions*, *Homes for All* and *Safe Cladding and Insulation Now* campaigns, to ensure that there are affordable decent homes for all.

**154** Our housing campaign has achieved victories for our members in the last year, including:

- The government has dropped the forced sale of council homes to fund the extension of the Right to Buy to housing association tenants in England, after initially deferring the policy for two years.
- It has also ended plans to phase out lifetime tenancies in social housing.
- The 2018 Autumn Budget provided a modest increase in funding for housing associations. It also lifted the borrowing cap on councils in England and Wales to enable them to build more homes. This is an important policy reversal, as we have long called for councils to have financial autonomy to put them on more of a level playing field with housing associations.

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## Equalities

**155** UNISON's third annual equality survey received a record-breaking 23,884 responses from members across all service groups and showed that equality continues to be low on the employers' agenda.

**156** Findings included:

- 39% had had no employer-organised equality training, and only 27% had had any such training in the past year.
- 27% said their employer did not keep them informed about its equality policies.
- 30% had experienced or witnessed one or more incidents of unfair discrimination in their workplace. 70% of these discriminatory acts had been by a manager.
- 20% said that they were more likely to get active in the union compared with a year ago, so there is a clear opportunity for UNISON to organise these members against discrimination and unfairness at work.

**157** Perhaps the most concerning statistics to come out of the survey were the questions around the members' standard of living. With ongoing austerity and pay freezes, our members continue to be under great financial pressure, which disproportionately affects those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act, including our Black, disabled and LGBT members:

- 38% described their standard of living as worse than it was a year ago.

- 20% went without keeping their home warm in the past year to balance the budget. This figure was higher for Black, disabled and LGBT members.
- 13% went without a regular daily meal in the past year to balance the budget. This figure was also higher for Black, disabled and LGBT members.
- 28% say they have seen an increase in their debts in the last year.

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## Black members

**158** UNISON continues to recruit Black members and organise around the key issue of race equality. During the year, Black members have worked on campaigns that challenge racism in the workplace and wider society. A current key campaign is around Windrush. Black members responded to the Windrush and *Lessons Learned* consultation, providing an opportunity to illustrate and expose the inhumanity of government policies and offer support to those members who have been affected.

**159** Black members have also contributed to the government's *Ethnicity Pay Reporting* consultation on the impact of racial disparity for Black members in the workplace and experiences across different ethnic backgrounds. Black members are committed to combating zero hours contracts and fighting austerity, while also creating, building and strengthening Black community links.

**160** Other key areas of work are:

- recruiting and organising Black members, especially young Black workers
- challenging hate crime and supporting victims
- political engagement and Black representation in public life through initiatives such as UNISON's *Becoming a councillor* training
- Promoting Black health and wellbeing.

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## Disabled members

**161** The work of disabled members had a strong focus on workplace equality this year, producing new and updated bargaining and representation resources including the comprehensive *Proving Disability and Reasonable Adjustments* guide and a disability leave bargaining



guide and model policy. Quick guides to reasonable adjustments and access to work were also produced for use on recruitment stalls.

**162** Disabled members continued to be at the forefront of the campaign for a fairer welfare system and used UNISON's *Punished for going to work* report on their experiences of applying for Personal Independence Payments (PIP) to lobby policymakers. In addition, disabled members submitted evidence to the women and equalities select committee on the enforcement of the Equality Act, particularly in terms of reasonable adjustments at work.

**163** This year saw the first national training course for branch disabled members' officers, attended by 30 activists. The new email bulletin for disabled members has promoted better dissemination of information about key disability equality campaigns—to receive a copy, log into MyUNISON and update your status to "disabled".

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## LGBT

**164** During the last year, the LGBT group continued its work on trans equality, including running a number of workshops and panel debates on the issue. The LGBT group also responded to the government's consultation on the Gender Recognition Act and circulated guidance for members to enable them to do likewise. A trans ally leaflet was launched which was very well received.

**165** Campaigning work has revolved round the following:

- marriage equality in Northern Ireland
- pensions equality for surviving same sex partners
- defending equality and human rights protections in the light of Brexit.

**166** The LGBT group continues to promote UNISON values with its outreach activities, having a strong presence at more Pride and LGBT community events than ever before. These events are celebrated in the annual LGBT recruitment and organising awards. Work continues on building non-binary inclusion within UNISON and a presentation has been produced which has been used widely by branches and regions.

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## Women

**167** Women in particular continue to experience a "double whammy" in terms of the impact of continued austerity

cuts in public services. Firstly as workers due to the large number of women in low paid jobs vulnerable to change and redundancy. Then as service users, because of the negative effect on the provision of care for children and/or older relatives, which they rely on. UNISON has led the way in supporting the Birmingham home care strikers and all regions have campaigned to protect and defend women workers.

**168** Automation is an increasing risk for many public sector jobs traditionally done by women and UNISON produced a bargaining guide on the issue.

**169** The women's committee have produced a campaigning guide for women activists which covers various topics including:

- maternity rights
- domestic abuse
- migrants' rights
- equal pay
- bullying and harassment
- pensions including the WASPI campaign.

**170** Uncertainty is affecting on women in wider society as well as the workplace. UNISON has continued to speak out on Universal Credit and the high cost of childcare. In January 2019, Amber Rudd, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, announced that the extension of the two-child limit would be scrapped. This was due largely to lobbying by UNISON and the union intends to build on this success by focussing on getting the limit scrapped altogether.

**171** UNISON has continued to push for our women members to have a real voice in the Labour Party and helped to secure a stand-alone Labour women's conference which was held in February 2019. Labour Link sent a delegation comprised of representatives from regions, SOGs, national Labour Link and young members. UNISON members participated in many of the debates and proposed a motion on social care.

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## Retired members

**172** During the past year UNISON's retired members' organisation continued to campaign on issues including:

- protecting the triple lock on the state pension

- combating the crisis in health and social care by fighting further privatisation, campaigning for improved funding, better quality social services and a system that treats both care workers and users with dignity
- protecting the bus pass.

**173** Retired members continued to show support for their working colleagues by attending branch, regional and national rallies and demonstrations including the Birmingham home care workers; Wigan NHS subco strikers; and staff working in care homes and home care across Bath and North East Somerset facing massive pay cuts.

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## Health and safety campaigning

**174** UNISON has continued to campaign on mental health issues. Following the launch of our *Mental Health Bargaining Guide* in the summer of 2018, in October of that year we held a successful mental health seminar.

**175** In March 2019 UNISON's health and safety seminar, in Belfast, featured a speaker from The Samaritans who described the support they provide to those with mental health problems, and the contribution trade unions can make. Other keynote speakers included UNISON President, Gordon McKay plus a speaker from the lone worker charity, Suzy Lamplugh Trust.

**176** In the autumn of 2018 UNISON launched a gig economy guide, highlighting the detrimental effects of zero hours contracts, and other forms casual working, on workers' health and safety.

**177** In February 2019 UNISON launched a musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) campaign. This launch, using UNISON claims data, showed how the government's austerity agenda has been the cause of injuries, some of which were career ending, and/or life-changing.

**178** Finally in April UNISON branches held events to commemorate International Workers' Memorial Day. UNISON also used the day to encourage members to fight for the living by becoming trade union safety reps.

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## Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland

### Wales

**179** The following are highlights of political campaigning in Wales

**180** *UNISON report: Post-Brexit trade deals could undermine devolution.*

In a specially commissioned Global Justice Now report, UNISON Cymru/Wales revealed a post-Brexit trade deal with the United States could threaten Wales' food standards, manufacturing jobs and the viability of the NHS. UNISON and social justice groups joined together to demand a voice for Wales' government and Assembly and called for Wales to withhold consent from International Trade Secretary Liam Fox's Trade Bill.

**181** *Health and social care integration in Wales*

UNISON Cymru/Wales published a report *Working for a shared common purpose*, which was written by the Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care at the University of South Wales. The report was commissioned because care and health workers complain those receiving care are being failed by a disjointed system where there is little investment in care workers themselves.

**182** *Commemorating the Windrush celebration*

UNISON Cymru/Wales Black members group helped to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Empire Windrush and to celebrate the contributions of those that arrived aboard the Windrush and contributed to rebuilding Britain after the Second World War during an event at the Senedd.

**183** *Success in reinstating education funding for minorities and travellers*

Following campaigning and sustained pressure by our Neath Port Talbot branch, the Welsh Education Secretary reinstated some Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) and Traveller Education Service (TES) for these groups under the Education Improvement Grant.

**184** *Celebrating 70 Years of the NHS*

UNISON Cymru/Wales was proud to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the NHS, as the birthplace of Aneurin Bevan, the founder of the NHS at the Bevan Festival in Tredegar alongside senior Labour politicians including Welsh First Minister Carwyn Jones and Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn.

**185** *Raising Awareness of modern slavery in Wales*

UNISON Cymru/Wales Black members group used their event marking the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition to highlight the plight of people currently suffering from modern slavery in Wales which has increased by 58% in the last year.

**186** *Mark Drakeford backs #RespectYourYouth*

First Minister Mark Drakeford committed himself to the demands of our Young Members Charter and Jo Stevens, MP for Cardiff Central, also signed up.

### 187 *Audit of Austerity*

In November, UNISON Cymru/Wales launched our Audit of Austerity.

**188** The report found that 28,100 local authority jobs have been lost in Wales since 2010 as a result of the severe spending cuts driven by the Conservative Westminster government.

### 189 *Supporting women workers going through the menopause*

This year we've been working with Wales TUC to promote menopause awareness. UNISON has brought together employers, trade union reps and employees to discuss how to better support women workers going through the menopause.

### 190 *Robin Hood Tax*

UNISON Cymru/Wales has been working closely with the Robin Hood Tax Campaign to help encourage politicians and local authorities to sign up to the campaign. They launched the next stage of their campaign at our policy weekend in October and participated in a UNISON-sponsored drop-in briefing for assembly members, with Dave Prentis in attendance, in February.

## Scotland

**191** Much of the focus for UNISON Scotland this year has been on winning cash for our membership—with our highest level of success in a decade. Inflation busting deals were signed in health and local government with important steps forward in other sectors. Last year's securing of national pay bargaining in further education delivered for members this year. All this and the Glasgow equal pay strike too.

**192** In local government, an initial one-year and supposedly final offer from the employer was rejected. Eventually a 9.8% cost of living increase over three years was obtained after campaigning and consultation with members. In addition the deal provides a commitment to fully consolidating the living wage, with an established joint working group to negotiate and implement.

**193** In the NHS campaigning delivered a statement from the Scottish government committing them to seeking a negotiated settlement between Scottish government, employers and staff side to cover all Agenda for Change staff for the three financial years 2018/19 to 2020/21. For the financial year 2018/19, the pay deal delivers a 3% uplift for the majority of staff as well as deletion of the lowest points on existing pay scales, and be based on the principle of no detriment.

**194** Another success was in further education where for the fifth successive year we won a pay rise in excess of pay policy.

**195** October 2018 saw the culmination of years of assiduous legal campaigning and branch organising when Glasgow City UNISON were at the centre of Britain's largest women's strike for equal pay. It provided inspiring images of working class women taking to picket lines and demonstrations. The hard-fought legal battle, the campaign and the strike won compensation of over £548m for discriminated-against and mostly low-paid women.

**196** The Scottish budget was, as usual, a cause of concern—determining around half of public spending in Scotland. This year the Scottish government again made minor changes to income tax but prioritised keeping business taxes to either below-inflation levels of increase or actual cuts. The end result was an effective cut of £230m. Some—but not enough—extra cash was made available to councils to deliver Scottish government policies. Total revenue funding for councils has fallen by 8% in real terms across eight years. Spending on teacher numbers and social care has been relatively protected but this means substantial cuts have had to fall on other areas.

## Northern Ireland

**197** UNISON Northern Ireland marked the 25th anniversary of UNISON with the publication and launch of our *Milestones* report tracking 25 years of struggle and solidarity in our region.

**198** Despite all we face in Northern Ireland, it has been a very successful year. We have increased our membership and grown our activist base.

**199** UNISON NI ended 2018 in significant 5% growth and our highest ever level of recruitment. Some 7004 new members were recruited over the period—40% ahead of the regional recruitment target.

## Bargaining

**200** We pressed for the pay increases our members deserve in the absence of political leadership. In December 2018, due to sustained public campaigning led by UNISON NI, the Department of Finance finally (in the absence of a Finance Minister) allocated £65 million to pay. Health workers in Northern Ireland still face a pay deficit compared to their colleagues in England, Scotland and Wales.

**201** We have vigorously pursued the UNISON campaign to ensure full compliance with Agenda for Change terms

and conditions for our members and have had serious success securing significant pay-outs to members, particularly in the Belfast Trust. We have also secured a pay-band uplift for thousands of homecare workers. The NJC pay award has been paid to members for 2018-2020.

### **Restoring devolution**

**202** Northern Ireland is experiencing ongoing political stalemate, due to the absence of political will to embed equality and human rights commitments as a framework for government. The situation is complicated by the DUP-Conservative Confidence and Supply Agreement, which gives the DUP major influence over the future of Theresa May's government and the political turmoil within the EU exit process which splits local political parties.

**203** The lack of devolved government has still not yet led to the UK government moving to formally reinstate direct rule from Westminster, limiting their intervention thus far to passing budgets for Northern Ireland.

**204** The campaign to restore devolution remains a UNISON Northern Ireland priority for 2019 and is closely aligned with the ICTU Better Work, Better Lives campaign.

### **NI budget**

**205** As with last year, the NI budget has been passed by the Secretary of State through Westminster, who continues to impose austerity policies on public services despite the £1 billion in funding announced as part of the DUP-Tory agreement. The budget does not allow our health and social services to meet rising demand, with the £100 million included to fund 'transformation' of the health service being non-recurrent. Education services in Northern Ireland face a real terms cut when already in a major financial crisis. Small amounts of funding that were intended to be spent on tackling poverty will instead be used to cover cuts to other programmes.

### **Exiting the EU**

**206** In conjunction with ICTU and alongside our allies in the rights and equality sector, we successfully worked to influence local political parties, the Irish government, and the EU to ensure that protection of the Good Friday Agreement was a priority issue within the exit negotiations.

**207** Exiting the EU threatens the key aspects of the peace agreement relating to equality of citizenship and parity of esteem, creating borders between communities that the Good Friday Agreement was meant to bring down. We remain very concerned that exiting the EU will undermine workers rights, equality protections and the devolved powers of the NI Assembly.

**208** While UNISON does not support Theresa May's deal, any deal between the UK and EU will only be possible if it includes a 'backstop' designed to protect the Good Friday Agreement, acting as an insurance policy for Northern Ireland.

### **Health and social services**

**209** Progress over the last 12 months on reform of the health and social care system and the implementation of the 10 year strategy *Delivering Together in Northern Ireland* remained slow due to the ongoing political vacuum.

**210** In July 2018, UNISON NI celebrated a landmark birthday for our health service and used this opportunity to remind the public and those who organise our health service that the founding NHS principles remain just as relevant 70 years on.

**211** On 30th June, UNISON led a march of thousands of trade unionists under the ICTU banner culminating in a rally at City Hall, Belfast urging the public to continue to support a public health service.

**212** We have achieved some successes for the lowest paid homecare workers directly employed by the Northern and Southern HSC Trusts, using job evaluation to lift hundreds of home care workers from Band 2 to Band 3. We will continue this campaign across the other three Trusts in 2019.

**213** In November 2018, we held a major conference in Belfast with the support of the UNISON Campaign Fund 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.

### **20th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement**

**214** On the morning of 10 April we sponsored a seminar to mark the 20th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. UNISON branches participated in an ICTU demonstration at Stormont calling for the implementation of the rights and equality commitments made within the agreement and a return to devolved government within a framework of equality and human rights.

**215** We continue to be concerned for the future of the Human Rights Act 1998. Although they have recently committed to remaining within the European Convention on Human Rights, the Tories have repeatedly stated a desire to repeal the Human Rights Act 1998.



### ***Abortion rights***

**216** In 2018, UNISON members were the largest responders in the cross-border, multi-union survey of workers on abortion as a workplace issue. The results fed into the successful campaign to repeal the 8th Amendment of the Irish Constitution and now forms significant evidence for the campaign demanding that the UK government comply with its international obligations and introduce free, safe and legal abortion services in NI.

### ***Marriage equality***

**217** UNISON activists continue to lead the *Love Equality* campaign for marriage equality in Northern Ireland, as Northern Ireland continues to be the only jurisdiction in these islands to have not legislated for equal marriage.

### ***Welfare cuts***

**218** In 2018 we have been urging the Secretary of State, the Equality Commission, Human Rights Commission, and the Commissioner for Children and Young People to take action against the two child cap and rape clause.

**219** Major changes to the welfare system continue to be rolled out without adequate political scrutiny or accountability due to the lack of an executive and assembly in Northern Ireland, which forms the basis for one of our regional motions to NDC 2019.

## Chapter three:

# Taking action on behalf of our members

Since the introduction of the Trade Union Act, UNISON has had a major focus on developing our industrial action strategy and practice to ensure the union is still fully able to defend members. At the heart of the Act is the punitive requirement for unions to achieve a minimum 50% turnout for any ballot to be legally valid and for some public services to meet an additional threshold of any action being supported by 40% of eligible union members.

**220** Clearly designed as a curtailment of union rights, the thresholds are so far tending not to inhibit local ballots but represent a major organising challenge for national ballots.

**221** An industrial action working party has been reviewing recent ballot data, talking with regions about recent balloting experiences and monitoring the increased use of digital consultative or indicative balloting programmes in the run-up to potential statutory ballots for industrial action.

**222** Overall, there have been a number of successful local ballots and disputes but we have not yet achieved a 50%+ turnout for a national ballot or consultation.

**223** Since the advent of the Trade Union bill, consultative, or indicative electronic balloting has become a core function of the union—servicing both national and local disputes.

**224** Data analysis and feedback from key people involved in the NHS pay ballot, local government Scotland ballot and other consultations show that branch and regional organising can be significantly supported by electronic balloting programmes. Digital campaigns are important, but work best alongside an integrated on-the-ground mobilisation campaign and longer-term engagement.

**225** Working closely with service groups and regions, the union has built up engagement in national digital consultations from 25% to 41.9% and the 50% threshold is not beyond our reach. Achieving a clear indication on a turnout close to the threshold also provides additional leverage with employers to win further concessions or offers.

**226** Learning from Scotland, which achieved the highest national turnout so far, shows that there were key contributing factors which all campaigns could learn from:

- long-term, continuing engagement is key to building our participation levels

- organisers and activists conducting walkabouts, harvesting up-to-date and detailed contact details from members and supporting the digital campaign with workplace meetings and high levels of visibility on the issue
- developing a strategy, action plan, communication strategy and timetable that begins well before a likely industrial action ballot
- being able to find and contact members at a time and through a channel that suits them
- using branch communications, supported by social media and press work to raise the profile of the issue
- maintaining momentum and building political leverage
- where possible building from one issue or consultation to another.

**227** The industrial action working party will continue to analyse and review our industrial action strategy and provide updated advice to branches.

**228** Since the last year's annual report, over 36,000 members have been balloted in local and national ballots. Members from a variety of workplaces have taken action, including:

- hospital and social care workers in the North West
- waste and refuse workers in Yorkshire and Humberside
- council workers in London, Birmingham and Scotland
- care workers in the South West
- university workers in the West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside.

The NEC receives regular reports on all ballots and action taken.

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## Key campaigns in health care

### Hospital car parking charges

**229** The UNISON *Hospital Parking Charter* was launched in June 2018 and we've been working with branches to promote it as a campaign resource.

**230** Over 3,500 health staff members responded to a survey in July 2018 which looked at the impact of hospital car parking charges on staff and the stress that this issue causes them. The results of this survey formed the basis of a story in the Sunday Mirror in October 2018 highlighting the disproportionate fines system that many Trusts operate and the inequitable system of charging staff for permits when there are more permits issued than spaces available.

**231** Work on hospital car parking charges continues; branches continue to contact the health team about this issue and we continue to promote the charter.

### Better hospital food

**232** UNISON continues our affiliation to Sustain's *Better Hospital Food* campaign, communicating concerns raised by members and helping inform lobbying efforts by the alliance.

**233** A better hospital food report has been circulated to branches outlining findings from the December 2018 survey exploring the availability of healthy food options in hospitals. These findings can be used to help shape and support branch campaigns.

### Legislation to protect emergency workers

**234** UNISON welcomed the introduction of the Assaults against Emergency Workers Act (2018) which allows courts to increase the sentences for those convicted of assaulting staff acting in emergency situations. UNISON was involved throughout the journey of the private members' bill and ensured that the definition of "emergency worker" was broad enough to cover most NHS staff in the course of their duties.

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## Higher education campaigns

**235** The past year has seen a number of significant wins for UNISON members in higher education. UNISON declared victory in a dispute with the University of Bradford over its plans for 250 redundancies. The branch campaigned and organised and ultimately, members took four days of strike action. After the strike as few as eight members were told that their jobs were still at risk, and around a dozen took voluntary redundancy.

**236** The threat of strike action was enough to see off the University of Leicester's plans to cut the hours and pay of the university's security team. The 26 workers affected would have seen pay cuts if the university had succeeded with its plan to cut their weekly hours from 37 to 35.

**237** UNISON was delighted that concerted campaigns to bring outsourced staff back in-house were successful at King's College London, as well as the London School of Economics and Goldsmiths College. This follows on from success at the School of Oriental and African Studies.

**238** A number of universities have become accredited Foundation Living Wage employers. Recent successes include the University of Bath, University of Bristol, Liverpool University and Manchester University which became the 5000th UK organisation to become a Living Wage employer.

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## School cuts

**239** Over the last year, UNISON's *Speak up for schools* campaign has highlighted how central government cuts are affecting the jobs and employment of school support staff across the country. UNISON has briefed MPs ahead of a number of parliamentary debates on school funding this year, lobbied ministers on behalf of members and highlighted in the media how funding cuts have led to courses being closed, redundancies in schools, colleges and universities and a worse education for children and young people.

**240** UNISON wants to see proper resources for a world-class education system—so a consultative ballot for schools in England was held at the start of 2019 to seek members' views on how they wanted to proceed. Members overwhelmingly said that government funding cuts were having a negative impact on schools. Nearly everyone wants UNISON to continue to campaign on school funding and a sizeable majority are prepared to take industrial action to secure improvements. Staff and activists going in to schools to speak to members was a positive experience, but unfortunately turnout, though higher than previous ballots was not as high as we would have liked. So at the time of writing the UNISON national schools committee is not recommending that we move to an industrial action ballot. However with a clear message from members, UNISON will continue our campaigns and work with other education unions to highlight the damage that government cuts to education funding are causing and consultative ballots are not ruled out in the future

## Further education

**241** Further education has been decimated by cuts in funding of 30% in the past decade. Last year UNISON stepped up campaigning on this issue. England saw an unprecedented joining together of the unions, students and employers to demand extra funding for a pay rise and to reverse the decline. The resulting *Love Our Colleges* campaign generated a good deal of media attention. The campaign increased political awareness via lobbying, a 'colleges week' in October, a very well-attended Westminster Hall debate and a cross-party letter from 165 MPs calling on the Treasury to increase funding.

**242** In Wales, £8m of extra funding was secured from the devolved administration to fund a pay rise after UNISON launched a consultative ballot on the initial paltry award of 1%. This has resulted in support staff on less than £19,500 receiving an award of 4.5% and those on higher salaries receiving 2%—a significant improvement on recent years.

## Early years

**243** Changes to early years funding in England has threatened the future of maintained nurseries and nurseries schools. UNISON has been working with partners to campaign to save these nurseries. Maintained nurseries are mainly located in areas of deprivation and have a proud record of high quality services and in tackling educational disadvantage.

**244** In March, UNISON supported a well-attended lobby and march in Parliament to campaign against the cuts to maintained nursery funding and the government has recently announced an extra £20m of funding for these nurseries.

**245** At last year's conference there was a presentation from Salford branch on their inspirational campaign to protect their maintained nurseries and we are pleased to report that their future has secured for the foreseeable future. The branch is still working with other branches and the NEC to campaign on behalf of all maintained nurseries and speaking to politicians of all parties.

**246** UNISON has worked closely with the shadow education team in developing Labour's manifesto on early years. The manifesto includes a framework that provides for fair funding, a decent wage, a defined career structure and a guarantee of access to continuing professional development for all early years staff.

**247** This year, UNISON has launched a new *Local Service Champions* campaign to raise the profile of local government members with the media, politicians and the general public across the UK.

**248** It aims to address the fact that there is not enough recognition for the work our members in local authorities do, by promoting the variety of roles across local government and the impact of their work.

**249** We have created organising and recruitment materials tailored to youth services, social care, housing and homecare with further materials planned for other occupational groups in local government. A series of 'how to' guides on dealing with local media, campaigning and writing a successful press release, have been sent to local government branches and promoted on social media.

**250** We've produced a long-form digital article and a feature article in U magazine showing a day in the life of local government through our members' jobs. We are developing a film showing the role that local government plays in all stages of our lives, and we are commissioning an opinion poll on how people perceive local services.

**251** A celebration day on 17 October 2019 will encourage branches, employers and politicians to promote the campaign and show their appreciation for local government workers through activities in workplaces and on social media.

## Cuts to local government funding

**252** A major survey of 21,000 members revealed the impact of the cuts on the services they provide, their working lives and their personal lives.

**253** The information gathered was used to highlight the damage to local government as a consequence of the cuts. It was used to generate media coverage, referenced in numerous parliamentary debates and used as part of the campaigning work to try and secure more funding for local councils. We were also able to use the information to help lobby specific MPs for the need for more money for council services by revealing the experiences of their constituents who took part in the survey. Around 3,000 UNISON members emailed their local MP to call upon them to demand more funding for council services.

**254** Work was also done to target Conservative MPs in marginal seats, as it was hoped that they would be more receptive to our calls for more funding for council services. A number of productive meetings took place, helping to raise the issue of local government finance further up the political agenda.

## Raising the profile of local government



**255** UNISON also co-ordinated an open letter of MPs to Chancellor Philip Hammond, calling for more funding for local government. This secured 121 signatures and cross-party support from the Labour, Lib Dems, SNP, Greens, and Plaid Cymru parties.

**256** A briefing event was held in Parliament in September, where 56 MPs attended including three Conservative MPs and one Conservative researcher. UNISON members from across the UK spoke to MPs about their experiences and we also provided constituency-level breakdowns of the survey conducted in June 2018. A number of MPs went on the relay the experiences of the members they met in parliamentary debates.

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## Energy campaigning

**257** UNISON has worked with the TUC, EPSU and Trade Unions for Energy Democracy to promote public ownership as part of a Just Transition Commission for workers to a low carbon economy. This has involved campaigning against fuel poverty, for home energy efficiency programmes, for greener pension fund investments and for hydrogen to be a future fuel to protect UNISON members working in the gas industry. In September 2018, lay members from all UK energy unions came together at the UNISON Centre to set out their demands for keeping good quality union jobs in the energy sector as it seeks to meet the UK's climate change targets.

**258** In Scotland UNISON is in partnership with Friends of the Earth Scotland and is calling for the Scottish Government's Just Transition to be made permanent. At Westminster, there has been engagement with the Labour Party on how to make their next manifesto expand their public ownership commitments further as part of a Green New Deal. Also, an all-party parliamentary group on hydrogen has been successfully established with UNISON support.

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## Water, environment and transport

**259** UNISON is campaigning for the water industry in England to return to public ownership and working closely with the TUC, Labour Party (whose 2017 manifesto included a commitment) and the We Own It campaign group to achieve this. In addition, with North West region, the UNISON Campaign Fund and We Own It, support is being given to a campaign in Greater Manchester to make Mayor Andy Burnham take control of the privatised bus network in the public interest.

**260** There was an important dispute at United Utilities in 2018 involving industrial action by members on pensions (the first in the industry since 1992) and there is currently a key dispute at the Environment Agency opposing a pay award imposed by the employer.

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## UNISON community campaigning

**261** This year, UNISON has continued our high-profile campaign to ensure staff doing overnight sleep-in shifts are paid at least National Minimum Wage.

**262** UNISON successfully sought leave to appeal to the Supreme Court over the judgment given at the Court of Appeal in 2018 (see page 26). This is seen as a key test case on the issue.

**263** UNISON also carried out a wide-ranging survey of members in the social care sector to get a more accurate picture of conditions for workers doing sleep in shifts. The results were shocking, showing that most workers work alone, many have their personal safety threatened and some endure extremely poor facilities. UNISON will continue its campaign to get carers doing sleep-in shifts paid the wages they have earned.

**264** UNISON has campaigned strongly around our *End Violence at Work Charter* campaign. Survey data consistently shows that half of members in the community sector had experienced violent or aggressive incidents at work in the preceding two years. The charter sets out 10 basic actions that employers can take to safeguard workers and provide support if a worker becomes the victim of a violent incident. The commitments include proper risk assessments being carried out, training on dealing with threatening situations and the provision of counselling and support pathways.

**265** Some 37 employers have signed up including Action for Children and Dimensions. UNISON held a parliamentary reception to raise the profile of the charter and to get MPs to put pressure on employers in their constituencies to sign up.

**266** In December 2018, UNISON wrote to every councillor in the UK asking them to make signing up to the charter a core part of their commissioning process. A number of councils have responded positively, including Salford, Southwark, Lambeth, Lewisham, Waltham Forest and Babergh and Mid Suffolk. On 16 January 2019, following a UNISON deputation to the City Council, Liverpool became the first local authority to take this step.

## Using the law to fight for our members

**267** This year UNISON has continued to use bold legal action to support our members and redress injustice. A combined industrial action and legal action strategy has been a powerful tool in the right to defend members' rights and terms and conditions.

### Winning equal pay in Glasgow

**268** After a decade long legal battle, some 13 months of negotiations and one of the biggest-ever equal pay strikes, Glasgow City Council finally agreed to settle some 14,000 equal pay claims with UNISON and others in January 2019.

**269** The settlement will result in over £500 million being paid to low-paid, mostly women workers including carers, cleaners, caterers and clerical staff.

**270** Importantly, the leader of the council, Susan Aitken, has also made public commitments that delivering pay equality will not lead to job losses or service cuts.

**271** In addition to settling historic equal pay claims up to April 2018, the council is working with the trade unions to deliver a new equality-proofed job evaluation scheme, to be completed by 2021. In the meantime, the equal pay claims will remain live for the period post-2018 until full equal pay is achieved.

### Winning holiday pay for term-time workers in Greenwich

**272** Five thousand part-time cleaners, teaching assistants, catering, administrative, school meal workers and other staff working for Greenwich council won pay-outs adding up to some £6m, following a five year legal battle over holiday pay calculations after strategic legal action by UNISON.

**273** UNISON took the case on behalf of employees, the overwhelming majority of whom are women, over the council's failure to calculate their annual leave properly. As a result some of the staff had been losing up to five days pay a year.

**274** The problem was first identified in 2012, when Julie, a school cleaner who has lived and worked in the borough all her life, noticed she'd lost a significant amount of pay when her contract changed from a full year to a term-time only one.

**275** Using European law, UNISON brought employment tribunal claims on behalf of 476 of the term-time only staff, arguing that they had been unlawfully treated less favourably than colleagues owing to their part-time status.

**276** UNISON first met with the council about the issue in December 2013 with the view to avoid legal proceedings. But the council was not willing to resolve the problem, so UNISON started lodging individual cases. In October 2018, Greenwich finally agreed that the formula it had used was wrong and agreed to correct it and pay almost six years of back pay owed to the workers.

### Defending the minimum wage in care

**277** UNISON is continuing to defend the right of careworkers to be paid at least the minimum wage for every hour of an overnight sleep-in shift, after the Supreme Court gave permission for an appeal against the previous ruling.

**278** UNISON is acting on behalf of member Claire Tomlinson-Blake vs Mencap after the Appeals Court overturned previous employment tribunal rulings and HM revenues and customs' advice that workers were entitled to the minimum wage for every hour of an overnight shift.

**279** Instead, the court ruled that they should be entitled to the minimum wage only for the hours they were actually working, not for those where they were considered to be "available for work".

**280** UNISON is continuing to pursue the legal case at the highest levels alongside taking industrial action over the issue with a number of care providers.

**281** The union is also taking employment tribunal claims on behalf of around 40 homecare workers in Haringey for underpayment of wages for travel time and waiting time as well as associated issues such as failure to inform and consult on redundancies.

**282** The cases focus a spotlight on widespread practices in the homecare industry; in particular the routine failure to pay workers for time spent working and systematic breaches of the National Minimum Wage Act. The employment tribunal is now in the process of proceeding towards a final hearing of all the Minimum Wage Act claims. We hope that these claims will finally be heard later this year or early next year.

## Campaign Fund

**283** The Campaign Fund continued to support a wide range of campaigns during 2018. Over the course of the year the Campaign Fund committee approved 55 bids from right across the union. Notable national campaign activity supported by the fund included UK-wide advertising highlighting the NHS 70th birthday, the high profile anti-Trump rally and supporting the anti-

privatisation campaigners, *We Own It*. The fund also continued to provide a much-needed resource for local political campaigns such as *Save Salford Nurseries* and the political strand of significant industrial battles, such as the Birmingham care workers dispute.

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## Political fund opt-in

**284** The political provisions contained in the Trade Union Act 2016 required all unions with political funds to move from an opt-out to an opt-in arrangement in Great Britain.

**285** The current opt-in rate to the political fund among new joiners is approximately 17 per cent, up from approximately 12 per cent in September 2018. Some 6 per cent opt for Labour Link and 11 per cent for the Campaign Fund.

**286** This increase reflects an optimisation programme aimed at increasing the opt-in rate among online joiners, which is how most new members join. Further research and development work aimed at increasing the number of members opting in is ongoing.

## Chapter four: Supporting our branches

Strong branches make for a strong union and UNISON is committed to supporting branches by providing a range of resources to ensure that our branches can access the tools, staff, financial support and information they need to recruit, organise and represent our members.

**287** Branch needs are changing as public services and the profile of the members who provide them change, so the union continues to adapt the services and resources available to support branches.

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### Branch membership system

**288** WARMS (web accessible RMS) is UNISON's integrated membership system specifically designed for branches. All branches are now live on WARMS, with more than 1,700 registered users overall. With such a diverse membership, personalised, relevant and timely information is essential for our branches to react swiftly when responding to organisational change. We have supported this by directly emailing automated dashboards to all WARMS users so branches can monitor online recruitment and member changes, population of contact details and newly-appointed stewards.

**289** Branches collectively send millions of emails every year to keep members informed on local issues or be notified of important events. The WARMS bulk email module is having a major upgrade by summer 2019. It will continue to be GDPR-compliant, allow branches to send bulk emails that are easier to digest, will provide bulk email statistics and will integrate into offline communication channels like letter mailings. We are also responding to activist requests to view member's details to confirm membership, update members' contact details, participate in specific member contact campaigns and record workplace visits while ensuring we have the appropriate governance controls in place.

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### Upgrading our membership systems

**290** Our membership records system was launched in 2001 and although it transformed how staff and branches access and update membership information, it was never designed to meet modern expectations. Now is the time for us to explore and implement a modern membership platform that meets the needs not only of staff and branches but also for our members.

**291** In today's digital world, members expect to interact with UNISON via different channels that offer a lean and standardised approach. This in turn provides a smooth member journey, primarily on mobile devices that is supported by effective secure back-end technology.

**292** To deliver this, we are looking to improve our digital tools so they integrate with an upgraded version of our membership system (RMS and WARMS). This new platform will provide members with more personalised and relevant information and allow us to introduce more online transactions and services for members to improve their experience and engagement with UNISON.

**293** This project is expected to take 18 months to complete but we'll also prioritise and fast-track any quick wins.

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### Supporting branches to budget

**294** UNISON's online branch accounting system (OLBA) was first introduced in 2008 and is now used by all our branches. The system was developed specifically for branch treasurers to keep records of their income and expenditure, assets and liabilities and to set budgets in an easy way—even without a background in finance. Branches are still required to keep all their supporting documents especially invoices, expense claims and receipts in case they are required by our auditors or HM revenue and customs.

**295** Over 50% of our branches now regularly set budgets and this is enabling us to target help and support towards branches that need it, in these difficult times.

**296** A support team based at the UNISON Centre helps branches with a broad and varied range of finance questions and issues—whether on tax, VAT, member expenses, or problems balancing the books. There is also online help functionality as well as step-by-step guidance for users. Further training and updates are provided on a regular basis and particularly for new branch officers.



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## Member Contact Tool for activists

**297** UNISON is now running a pilot scheme, trialling an activist version of the popular member contact tool (MCT) previously only available for organising staff.

**298** This pilot will allow activists to have access to appropriate membership data remotely to support organising while out in workplaces or the community. It is one of the key ways the union is using digital technologies to link our on-the-ground organising with high quality data to allow us to maximise our organising work.

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## Online branch assessments

**299** The Organising Framework, a digital platform which supports the joint branch and regional assessment process, was expanded with new questions and functionality based on feedback in time for the 2018/19 exercise. Some of the features included the geographical representation of members and activists to assist with keeping track of fragmentation and the ability to set and keep track of committed actions within the branch.

**300** The information submitted using the Organising Framework has begun to be analysed and inform campaigns such as Grovember and the recruitment and organising of apprentices and young workers, as well as strategies around member learning, activist development and branch's digital engagement.

**301** This practical, informative and environmentally-friendly tool will continue to be reviewed and developed to support branches and regions to meet and contribute towards UNISON's objectives.

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## A case system for branches

**302** Increasingly, branches are wanting to use an online system to record, monitor, update and analyse information about cases undertaken in the branch. A pilot programme is now testing a system and exploring the common requirements branches have for such a system; the data protection and other security issues that need to be resolved and what sort of system can be provided or recommended for branches to support branches with the effective management, training and support of casework.

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## Branch funding support

**303** The branch resources working party have met regularly during 2018 to review evaluations from branches

that received uplifts in 2017 and also those branches eligible for uplifts in 2018.

**304** Regions were provided with the actual financial data and were advised which branches may benefit from the next tranche of uplift funds and asked to work with those branches to confirm they met the criteria. Arrangements were then agreed and signed off by a regional lay committee.

**305** A total of 192 branches were identified, and financial support was given to 101 branches to provide sufficient funds to support their objectives-based budgets. Their respective uplifts were paid before the end of the financial year 2018.

**306** Once the financial information is available for 2019, the same process will begin for this year, to continue to help branches meet their emerging challenges.

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## Branch access to the Campaign Fund

**307** Regions and branches made good use of the Campaign Fund during 2018. Most regions used the fund to support equalities events. And many branches submitted successful bids for important local political campaigns. The following examples give a flavour of some of the successful bids:

- Salford City branch received funding towards its campaign to save its local authority nurseries. This enabled them to cover costs of hiring a coach to come to bring nursery staff, users and children to London to lobby the Department for Education.
- George Elliot Hospital branch received funding for an NHS 70th anniversary campaign, highlighting the importance of maintaining all services provided at the hospital site, engaging community champions and putting pressure on local MPs to speak up for the hospital.
- Manchester local government branch received funding to contribute towards the Bees in City community project. These costs were used for one of the many bee sculptures that were installed across the city. The worker bee became a symbol of the city's resilience after the 2017 bomb attack.

**308** Successful bids resulted in regions and branches receiving a total £275,467 from the fund during 2018.

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## The Regional Pool

**309** The Regional Pool is a long-standing fund based on a small percentage of subscription income. Funds are made available to financially support recruitment and organising initiatives at branch level. The pot is divided between regions according to size with a regional lay committee responsible for approving bids from branches or groups of branches.

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## The Fighting Fund

**310** The Fighting Fund is an annually-reviewed financial resource to enable branches or groups of branches to bid for organiser staff resources for specific time-limited organising and recruitment projects with clear objectives and milestones.

**311** The fund was temporarily frozen during 2018 due to the challenges posed by the Trade Union Act. This time was used to review and revise some of the operational processes relating to the running of the Fighting Fund. It was re-opened later in the year with four regions accessing it so far.

**312** Over the course of 2018 Fighting Fund projects have contributed to the recruitment and organising of members and activists in emergent areas such as social care, the private sector, commissioning and procurement, academies, digital pilots as well as core areas such as local government, health and higher education.

**313** Participating branches are asked to contribute towards the fund to ensure that it can continue to be available to support branches in the future. This support amounted to £1.7 million in 2018. Projects are agreed by the presidential team with the majority of organiser positions being recruited, inducted and managed alongside other organiser colleagues.

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## Branch websites

**314** This year we have continued to offer branches our website package: a Wordpress-based template website site based on our national website design, plus hosting, for £300 a year. We have run training days in London, East and West Midlands, Cardiff and Manchester and welcomed around 60 new branches to the scheme with a total of 142 branches now using the system.

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## Bargaining support

**315** Over the last year, the bargaining support team has developed cross-service group guidance that provides branches with concise practical advice for negotiating on key aspects of staff terms and conditions.

**316** Our most regular update is the pay claims guidance that is designed to be of particular assistance to branches engaged in local pay negotiations for staff outside the major nationally-determined claims.

**317** New and revised guidance over the year has been made available to branches including:

- Supporting mental health in the workplace
- Making the case for the new Living Wage rates
- Bolstering carers' rights in the workplace;
- Defending staff interests during the introduction of automating technology
- Benchmark rates for unsocial hours, standby and call-out payments
- A model approach to seeking agreement on sickness absence arrangements
- Highlighting support needed for workers diagnosed with a terminal illness, including the Dying to Work charter
- The impact of sleep-in legal judgements on the payment of the National Minimum Wage
- Protections against excesses of employer monitoring and surveillance policies
- How to use information and consultation rights to maximise union influence
- Negotiating recognition agreements, including a model dispute resolution procedure.

## Chapter five: Supporting our members

“Support when I need it at work” is the main reason the majority of our members join a union. Many workplace issues are of course resolved through collective action or negotiation by branches but to members—whether the support comes from the branch through activity or the national union through advice and guidance, welfare help or legal representation, the important thing is to feel that the union is there when they need it.

**318** And with members facing reorganisations, job losses, financial hardship and restructuring of roles and workplaces, the security of knowing that they can call on support from anyone from a knowledgeable local rep to a legal expert is crucial.

**319** This section of the report deals with some of the key ways the union nationally supports individual members.

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### Advice and representation

**320** In 2018 our legal provider Thompsons dealt with 3,727 UNISON employment cases covering issues such as flexible working, unfair dismissal, national minimum wage issues, whistleblowing, working time, maternity rights, compromise agreements, equal pay and discrimination cases.

**321** In addition to this, a similar number of cases were dealt with in regions and from the national centre. This is only the tip of the iceberg with many more cases handled at local level in branches and workplaces—either as individual issues or as part of the branch’s collective bargaining and representation work.

**322** Aside from the comprehensive assistance members are given with employment law issues, UNISON’s legal services scheme also helps members with other types of legal issues.

**323** In the past year, this has included personal injury advice following an accident or injury at work for our members—such as assaults at work, manual handling and needlestick cases, slipping and tripping and falling cases, road traffic accidents and injuries arising from industrial diseases such as work-related stress and bullying cases, asbestos cases and work related upper limb disorder claims. This service also extends to members and their families for non work related accidents. In 2018 we supported nearly 6000 members and their family members under this part of the scheme. This support led to the successful conclusion by our lawyers of thousands of cases in 2018, ensuring our members and their family members received the

compensation they deserved. Last year this amounted to just under £33 million of compensation.

**324** In 2018 UNISON helped over 500 members under our criminal law advice and assistance scheme. This supports UNISON members in the harrowing position of defending criminal allegations arising out of the work they do.

**325** Finally other parts of our legal scheme are also of great value to our membership. We supported nearly 5000 members through our free initial legal advice scheme last year alone, which deals with non-work related issues. We also assisted over 2,500 members under our wills and conveyancing service, offering free standard wills to our members and discounted wills and conveyancing services to our members and their families.

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### JCWI immigration advice line

**326** One membership service that has unfortunately become even more crucial this year is our immigration advice line provided through the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI). In 2018, the advice line was used by 221 members of over 60 nationalities, both EU and non-EU. Some members of British nationality have also used the service.

**327** Many of those who used the advice line were lower paid workers such as cleaners, health care assistants, care workers, catering staff, porters, nurses, admin workers, traffic warden, street cleaners and sanitation workers.

**328** The kind of issues raised by our members were about visa extensions, the right of permanent residency for EU nationalities, rights of family reunion, indefinite leave to remain, British citizenship and the requirement by the Nursing and Midwifery Council affecting work visas for non-EU nationality nurses.

**329** The service also dealt with removal and deportation cases including some Windrush cases.

## UNISONdirect

**330** The union's contact centre, UNISONdirect, is part of the frontline in supporting our members. It is often the first point of contact for members and deals with hundreds of thousands of calls every year. It means our members know they can reach the union, even if they don't know the branch details or it is outside normal working hours. UNISONdirect deals with member queries by phone, email and online chat.

**331** It is a key channel for people joining the union—allowing people to join on the phone or talking people through the process of joining online.

**332** In 2018 UNISONdirect dealt with 316,000 calls. The busiest month for calls was October when 29,000 calls were taken. In addition UNISONdirect also dealt with 27,000 emails and had 4000 online chats.

**333** The subjects members contact UNISONdirect are wideranging but the most common concern was contract changes (25,000 calls) and sickness or sickness monitoring meetings (12,000 calls).

**334** In 2018 UNISONdirect updated personal details for 16,000 members, and helped 11,000 members transfer employer or branch—helping to keep our membership data up to date.

**335** UNISONdirect also dealt with 7000 requests for access to the free legal advice sessions and assisted 3000 members access the free online wills service. We put 4000 members in touch with their branch when they were concerned about bullying.

## There for You, a unique welfare service

**336** There for You aims to help UNISON members with the vast range of issues they encounter by providing direct financial help in the form of grants, as well as advice, guidance and working with other charities and statutory providers where appropriate.

**337** During 2018, we continued to deliver critical support on a daily basis. We spent £458,914 on alleviating hardship with most members needing financial assistance due to having insufficient income to manage a significant life event such as ill health, caring responsibilities, relationship breakdown, bereavement etc.

**338** Below is a breakdown of grant expenditure in 2018:

Grant type	£
Emergency crisis payment	17,660
Special payments including hospital travel or childcare	14,397
Short-term weekly assistance	113,141
Household white goods and furniture	57,126
Priority commitments	55,304
Disability, health, medical	9,312
Household maintenance and services	11,851
Clothing	5,970
Utility costs	8,785
Priority debt	58,269
Small grants—school uniforms	44,600
Small grants—winter fuel	24,440
Bankruptcy	12,745
Wellbeing programme	10,150
Funeral	11,864
Exceptional payments	3,300
<b>Total</b>	<b>458,914</b>

**339** Other highlights from the year included:

- New branch welfare officer training programme – with every training event oversubscribed.
- Produced series of information guides and new handbook to help branch welfare officers in their role.
- Organised two-day seminar attended by 120 branch welfare officers and supported regional welfare committees
- Rebranded and re-launched the UNISON Lottery, increasing the number of supporters
- Introduced new publicity materials including a branch welfare newsletter template so that the work of the charity can be promoted locally.
- Secured funding from the Civil Service Insurance Society. As a result, we were able to increase the number of members helped under the small grants programme and the amount that beneficiaries received.

**340** A full There for You annual report is available from [thereforyou@unison.co.uk](mailto:thereforyou@unison.co.uk)



## Member learning

**341** There were 372 member learning events in 2018, attended by some 4,744 members. These included one-day Open University workshops, the WEA one-day workshops as well as the Return to Learn and Women's Lives 10-week courses, and notably, a growing range of workshops delivered by regional staff. New courses introduced in 2017/2018 such as *Get That Job* exceeded expectations in their popularity.

**342** Four new member courses were commissioned from the WEA and will be available throughout 2019: *Supporting Cancer in the Workplace*, *Introduction to Family History*, *Be Safe Online* and *Study Skills*. Developing resources and training materials to support members develop digital and IT skills has been a key feature of the member learning activity during 2018—nearly 1,000 members and activists have been supported with digital training. This doesn't include workers supported by digital champions, a role that LAOS has been promoting in recent months. A new training resource, *Guide to Supportive Technologies* was also published to help people find apps and websites to help with their everyday work. Since the launch of our partnership with E-Careers, 20 members have taken up one of their online courses, in topics ranging from a Level 2 Medical Secretary diploma to a Level 3 Executive PA course.

**343** Following the success of *Stepping Up: taking workplace reading and writing to the next level* in 2017, materials for a two-day workshop, *Supporting language, literacy and numeracy at work*, were rolled out in 2018. This course is designed to equip ULRs and activists to run short activities or taster workshops to support language, literacy and numeracy in the workplace.

**344** UNISON's first-ever creative writing competition, celebrating the union's 25th anniversary, attracted a wide range of entries. During 2018 over 6,000 Quick Reads books were distributed to ULRs to support them in their activity in workplaces as part of the *Reading Ahead* scheme.

**345** Some 145 members were supported financially through UNISON's bursary scheme to undertake study, with grants totalling just over £36,000. Approximately 40 grants were to support members undertaking an Open University course.

**346** UNISON worked with Exeter University to conduct an all-member *Skills for the Future* survey in December 2018. With over 35,000 responses, the survey is one of the largest non-governmental surveys ever undertaken in this area in the UK.

**347** Some 46% said that there had been new computer or automated systems introduced within the last three years and 28% said there had been "other new equipment" introduced into their job area. Some 8% felt that their job would be lost over the next few years because of technology. Not surprisingly, 66% of responders said that they had a need for digital skills training.

## UNISON Living

**348** UNISON isn't just here to support members at work. UNISON Living is the union's package of extra benefits and services for members provided by our endorsed service-providers.

**349** These providers offer a range of services and products from the essentials such as insurance, health and dental plans, savings plans, financial and mortgage advice, to the extras such as holidays and car purchase.

**350** UNISON Living providers have been carefully selected to ensure they meet strict criteria for endorsement and share our union's aims and values and several of our providers have worked with UNISON for many years: UIA mutual have worked with UNISON and partner union NALGO for 125 years, and LV for more than 80 years.

**351** The relationship also generates income for UNISON, which is used in part to support There for You, the union's welfare charity and the union's international development fund.

**352** The providers' 2018 business management reports confirmed a strong and static UNISON customer base with good conversion and renewal rates, however they also showed the need to reach out to members to increase engagement and acquisitions.

**353** With this in mind, it was recognised that the union's organiser network is critical to ensuring that more members have the opportunity to engage with the UNISON Living services. The focus in 2018 has been to engage regions and branches so a national seminar was held in November 2018 with the providers' teams and regional named officers for membership services, providing a forum to review and inform the UNISON Living work programme.

**354** Throughout 2018/19, we have been working to develop our membership services offering through new partnerships—especially around leisure and lifestyle services.

## Professional services team

**355** UNISON's professional services team provides help and support to members at what can be one of the most stressful times in their careers. The service supports eligible members who are professionally-regulated and have problems with their registration, have had their fitness-to-practice questioned, or who have had a complaint made against them that their regulatory body is investigating.

**356** The unit provides representation and advice at all stages of the regulator's investigatory process leading up to and including hearings.

**357** During 2018 the unit continued to receive a high number of cases from every region and country that UNISON organises within. Currently the unit has 693 cases open. The fact that 377 were referred in previous years shows the length of time taken to resolve cases with regulators.

### Overall cases by year

Overall cases for 2018 received	316
Overall live cases at end of 2018	693

UNISON professional regulation cases by country 2018

Country	Number of cases
England	190
Northern Ireland	0
Scotland	110
Wales	16

### UNISON professional regulation cases received by year

Year	Number of cases received
2016	239
2017	258
2018	316

### UNISON professional regulation cases by regulator 2018

Regulator	Number
Care Quality Commission	1
Disclosure and Barring Service	5
Education Workforce Council	1
General Dental Council	1
General Pharmaceutical Council	2
Health and Care Professionals Council	85
Nursing and midwifery Council	138
Scottish Social Services Council	79
Social Care Wales	3
Teaching Regulation Agency	1

### UNISON outcome of cases closed in 2018

Outcome	Number
Caution	6
Condition of practice	8
No case to answer	87
No impairment	16
Registration appeal	1
Struck off	6
Suspension	5
Undertakings	1
Voluntary removal	2

## Appendix I: Monitoring Information

Since its foundation, UNISON has pursued a policy of proportionality and fair representation to ensure that our members are properly represented at all levels of the union. UNISON monitors participation and membership of all national and regional conferences and committees.

We remain committed to ensuring that our organisation remains relevant and reflects our membership. This includes our local lay representatives as well as our members on national bodies.

Of UNISON members, the percentage of women (proportionality) is:

Membership	Full members 77% Retired members 61% Overall (all categories) 75%
Accredited Stewards	52%
Health and safety reps	44%
Branch Secretaries	53%

### 2018 National Delegate Conference – information on delegates

Monitoring identified the following levels of participation at last year's conference;

Female	61%
Part-time workers	21%
Black members	18%
Disabled members	17%
Young members (under 27)	3%

Service group breakdown;

Local government	44%
Water, environment, transport	2%
Health care	30%
Energy	2%
Police and justice	4%
Community	3%
Higher education	7%

Subscription band:

A	Up to 2,000	0.5%
B	2,001 – 5,000	1%
C	5,001 – 8,000	1%
D	8,001 – 11,000	3%
E	11,001 – 14,000	3%
F	14,001 – 17,000	6%
G	17,001 – 20,000	15%
H	20,001 – 25,000	18%
I	25,001 – 30,000	16%
J	30,001 – 35,000	13%
K	Over 35,000	13%
	Member in education / apprenticeship or on unpaid leave	0.5%

## National Executive Council

45% Of NEC members responded to the 2017 survey

Female	50%
Male	50%

### Ethnicity

Black UK	10%
Irish	3%
White UK	80%
White Other	7%

### Disabled

Yes	23%
No	77%

### Service Group

Local government	43%
Health care	27%
Community	10%
Energy	3%
Water, environment, transport	3%
Higher education	10%
n/a	4%

### Subs band

A – D (up to £11k)	9%
E – G (£11,001 - £20k)	30%
H – K (above £20k)	61%
n/a	1%

### Age

16-26	0%
27-39	23%
40-49	20%
50+	57%
Not answered	0%

## Line count figures by region for 2018 (full members)

Region	2018 Full members
Eastern	76,250
East Midlands	83,500
Greater London	110,000
Northern	74,500
Northern Ireland	39,750
North West	178,750
Scotland	150,000
South East	94,250
South West	77,000
Wales	88,000
West Midlands	106,750
Yorkshire& Humberside	125,750
	<b>1,204,500</b>



## UNISON conferences delegate attendance

### 2011–2018

Year	Black		Women's		HE		Comm		Health		Young		Energy		WET		Local Gov		National		Retired		Police		Disabled		LGBT	
	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All
2011	302	577	366	770	103	202			499	1278	88	124	70	150	42	106	869	1414	1569	3348	317	450	132	308	138	356	230	398
2012	282	559	328	730	120	245	86	191	475	1246	98	135	61	147	50	111	847	1317	1512	3224	306	472	119	328	167	375	222	412
2013	273	557	391	810	111	238	86	200	479	1257	89	133	51	136	44	116	813	1318	1448	3169	321	495	110	317	154	369	244	412
2014	275	585	352	732	108	251	98	225	475	1254	93	147	54	127	43	110	765	1239	1409	2979	368	506	118	281	227	446	275	456
2015	382	675	414	780	121	262	73	194	481	1252	89	140	46	121	35	102	769	1181	1438	3061	383	549	102	292	193	392	272	462
2016	403	683	462	821	111	238	97	207	466	1194	96	143	51	115	36	93	726	1124	1408	2821	368	528	94	276	195	394	239	420
2017	397	681	422	824	106	225	90	202	480	1183	92	141	52	117	43	103	722	1120	1405	2849	380	535	81	264	213	428	289	465
2018	388	665	453	900	93	209	79	193	454	1117	96	137	45	110	34	95	707	1102	1376	2818	371	535	77	274	203	439	250	419

#### Key

Peak year for delegates across these years

Peak year for total number registered across these years

No conference held

Del = delegates + sharer 1s, where appropriate

UNISON has 13 rule book conferences: national delegate conference, seven service group conferences, four self-organised group conferences, retired members' conference, plus the national young members' weekend each year.





