

Stronger together

Community service group
annual report 2021/22

Introduction

It is now nearly two years since the end of our Conference in Cardiff, the last UNISON event before the Government announced the first COVID lockdown in March 2020. When we said goodbye to each other then, we could not have suspected that it would be so long before we met again. So long before we could thank all of our great activists for their vital work, supporting members in the greatest general health crisis our country has faced for at least a hundred years. Your work has never been harder, but also never more needed, or appreciated by those you support. On behalf of the Service Group Executive, I thank all of you.

Of course, the last two years have been extraordinary, with both branches and staff concentrating their efforts and resources on the urgent needs of members faced with the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic.

The Community Service Group Executive annual report for 2022 combines reflection on the urgent work in our sector to tackle new priorities arising from COVID, and reports on the work delivered across our Service Group since our 2020 Conference on the priorities identified there.

Please do share this report within your branches, as this outlines work undertaken on behalf of our members and sets out the work we have taken forward over these two extraordinary years. This work has been delivered thanks to the commitment of our lay activists, with the support of full-time staff at both Regional and National level. By working together, we work effectively to meet the challenges we face. The report also shows the variety of work undertaken by our various branches, and its effectiveness, in protecting and advancing our members' interests.

And while the last two years have been incredibly difficult for all, as the country emerges from the long nightmare of COVID there are new threats and opportunities. The second half of last year saw workers with more bargaining power in negotiating wages and improving terms and conditions, with severe labour shortages emerging in many community sectors – social care in particular. There are already the first signs of better outcomes for our members – UNISON East Midlands has done great work to negotiate a new wage floor of £10 an hour and a general 5% uplift at Methodist Homes for the Aged. It's our job to build on these successes, spreading them to cover more workplaces and groups of our members.

Lastly, I would like to thank my colleagues on the Service Group Executive and the staff who support our work for their input throughout these two extraordinary years.

Malcolm Gray
Chair of the Service Group Executive

Recruiting, organising, representing and retaining members

The spread of Coronavirus and the circumstances of shutdown and radical changes to ways of working meant that efforts have been concentrated on meeting the immediate needs of members.

The extraordinary circumstances of the COVID emergency have been reflected very much in the movements in our membership numbers over the past two years and their needs. As soon as the crisis struck in March 2020, there were urgent calls from members for support across a whole range of issues., most particularly and immediately

The most immediate and pressing issue was securing members' safety in the face of a new, dangerous illness whose mechanisms of transmission were little understood. The national instruction to work from home where people could, meant many of our members were working from home entirely or largely, often for the first time. Other members in roles where this was impossible, such as our front-line care worker members, continued to work, because those they served depended on them, but were often exposed to serious risks with inadequate work organisation and insufficient protective equipment.

Care, as always, was thought of last by the Government. In an effort to "save the NHS" large numbers of people were discharged from hospital, untested for COVID, to care homes. They seeded the disease in the care homes they were sent into, with tragic consequences. UNISON Reps worked heroically to support members. And UNISON was central in pressing for dedicated testing for care workers and residents, instituting a system for distribution of free PPE to all care workers, and progressively achieving safer working practices for care workers.

In the summer of 2021 we conducted a survey of our social care manager members to find out how we can better support them. Since then we have worked with Managers in Partnership (MiP) to organise and support these members. We have created bespoke training, webinars and regular communications for social care managers, who have been facing unprecedented challenges relating to recruitment and retention of social care staff in a rapidly changing landscape, related to the COVID pandemic, such as increased sickness absence and government policies such as testing requirements (shortages of tests) and mandatory vaccination.

Brexit has been another factor which has impacted the shortage of care workers and funding of the sector remains a critical issue, despite the government's attempts to increase funding to the sector, it falls far short of what is needed. By organising and supporting this critical group of members we hope to use their expertise and experiences in our lobbying work and that a dedicated forum of social care managers might serve as a recruitment tool.

Like other parts of the union, Community saw rapid growth in membership between March 2020 and the end of that year, as the importance of union membership and the need to have skilled advice and representation became clear to more workers. The "insurance policy" motivation for joining was very

strong at this time. Since the end of 2020, membership has declined and we are back at a very similar membership level to before the pandemic. The explanation for this probably lies in a combination of factors: workers feeling at less risk given that the economy has done much better than feared, with unemployment not rising nearly to predicted levels; the “great resignation” as levels of voluntary resignation from jobs across the economy have run at unprecedented levels, so there’s higher turnover of jobs, leading to more termination of union memberships; and restructures in many community workplaces, which have been under particular funding pressures as a result of COVID.

In the very difficult circumstances of the last two years, it is thanks to outstanding work by reps and branches that our levels of membership have held up as they have. Widespread homeworking has meant that traditional forms of face-to-face recruiting have been very hard. Great work by reps up and down the country has meant that we have continued to maintain membership even in this difficult environment.

However, over the same period, the number of Community reps has considerably reduced. Retirements and restructurings have led to many excellent, long-serving reps leaving their roles, while the “pipeline” of people to replace them, deepening their involvement within the work of the union, has slowed as COVID has pushed out physical meetings and interactions, which are the usual mechanism of recruitment into such roles. This will be an urgent priority over the next 12 months, as the stalwart group of reps we still have face ever-increasing pressures and demands, which are simply not sustainable beyond this period of emergency.

Our national CVS sector group has initiated a couple of initiatives to recruit and organise members in the CVS sector, including creating Community branded stickers and pens for branches to download and order and organising a lunchtime webinar on ‘Keeping safe at work: an event for UNISON members working in smaller charities and non-profit organisations’ in October 2021.

We have started to send regular e-newsletters to all Community members with information on upcoming events and latest resources. This has prompted more members to get in touch with us and we hope that by keeping Community members better informed they will feel better connected to the union.

Negotiating on behalf of members

Negotiating a good deal for our members is core work for the union. Pay negotiations have been particularly difficult over the past two years, as employers have prepared for very serious COVID impacts upon their finances. So deals secured in 2020 and 2021 were generally smaller than in previous years, and in some cases, for example in Barnado's, deals agreed and balloted upon in 2020 were withdrawn as the crisis intensified.

The average 2020 and 2021 pay rises in Community according to various sources were:

	2020	2021
Labour Research Department – voluntary sector	1.8%	1.5%
XpertHR – not for profit sector	2.0%	1.5%
Incomes Data Research – not for profit	2.0%	1.3%

National Employers

Action for Children

We have continued to work hard for members in AfC, and membership has risen within the employer. Successive restructures have been considerably improved by our engagement. However, AfC went back on the agreed pay year deal, paying a 2% rise instead of the agreed (and accepted in ballot) 3% in April 2021. They sought and obtained our agreement to this change on the basis that the finances simply did not permit it, that they were projecting an annual loss and a fall in the value of their investment portfolio to below the level approved by their Board. Reps and members were therefore deeply angered when AfC's annual report showed a profit of over £6m and reserves much more than 50% above the Board-required level. We will be seeking the restoration of the unpaid monies in the 2022 pay claim, and AfC clearly will need to work hard to demonstrate their competence and integrity; pending this, we will be relying mainly on information which has been independently audited.

Dimensions

Members voted by a good majority to accept the agreed pay deals in both 2020 and 2021. In 2021 for the first time we lifted the floor wage at Dimension above the living wage, with the aspiration to achieve the real living wage. Further to these improvement in basic pay, two non consolidated payments were made during 2020/21 for permanent staff, recognising their outstanding effort in the depths of the pandemic. And we improved our internal organisation, and the nationwide coverage of our reps network, recruiting further regional participants for the National Forum and working with UNISON LAOS to deliver accredited training via a bespoke training course for 11 stewards in 2021 forming part of the National Forum Group. Membership grew substantially over the period.

RNIB

In both 2020 and 2021, good pay increases of 2.5% were secured for members, who voted to accept the deals in ballot. The 2021 agreement also included additional non-consolidated payments ensuring that the total value of the award for all staff was at least £1000.

Over the period, RNIB withdrew from most of its direct ongoing service provision, including schools, its College, and most of its care provision. The consequence of this was a number of TUPE transfers. Through close engagement with these processes, we ensured that the core terms of all members involved were protected through the transfer period.

We are currently working with Unite, our sister union, to negotiate the 2022 pay proposal and have consulted our members on what they want to see included within it. In addition, we have entered negotiations with the employer about creating a new pay progression model.

Marie Curie

The tumultuous events of the last two years have been especially challenging for our members in Marie Curie. For frontline staff, the very core function of their work, to ensure comfort and dignity to the terminally ill, has been made so much more difficult by the requirements to wear bulky, uncomfortable PPE, and the restrictions on visits. For our members in support roles, the shutdown in retail and the increasing difficulties in fundraising meant long uncertainty and painful restructuring. We have worked hard to get the best possible outcomes in such processes, including supporting a group of members to frame alternative proposals which saved the jobs of two of the community fundraising teams where the original proposal was for total closure. This is the product of good work, relationships built over time, and a management prepared to listen and think as it responded to these perilous times.

In pay terms, we negotiated a pay settlement in 2020 which would have given at least 2% for all members but in the circumstances of the pandemic the organisation proceeded only with the rise for the frontline teams. In 2021, further productive negotiation led to a settlement, accepted by members, giving all at least 2.5% and setting a wage floor of £9.50. Following a ballot of RCN members, where they rejected the offer for nursing staff, that offer was also improved for frontline members such that they would receive the same rise as if they worked in the NHS. We will be prioritising harmonisation of other terms to narrow the gap between Marie Curie workers and their NHS counterparts.

Together

After a good pay increase in 2020, where average awards were around 2.5%, we were unable to secure any increase in 2021 as the organisation grappled with the impact of COVID. However, it is now facing severe recruitment and retention pressures as a consequence. We have submitted a pay claim seeking a £10.20 wage floor (up from £9.50), wider steps up to the senior care worker role, better payment for sleep-ins and a general wage increase. At the time of writing, management are considering their response.

Campaigning and promoting UNISON on behalf of members

Social care

Unsurprisingly, the pandemic has dominated campaigning activity as the needs of members for support, and their focus, has been on dealing with that given the direct impact on our frontline social care members. Working across UNISON service groups, former Community National Officer Gavin Edwards, Senior National Officer for Social Care (and former Community National Officer) coordinated work to support our members in social care, with senior Community lay activists and your national officer taking part in that work.

UNISON has throughout the crisis been seen generally and by the media as the social care union, articulating the views of our social care members and setting out the support they need. UNISON pressure led to significant improvements in equipment supply and rules, to keep members and they care for as safe as possible, and to monies for payment of full pay when absent for COVID. Sadly, the Government failed to make that mandatory for employers, and many did not take up the support available., instead paying low or no sick pay to such workers. And we have worked together with others, most particularly in the Social Care Coalition, to make the case for more investment in a better social care system. This unlocked successive slugs of money, but it is clear that these are not sufficient to create the social care sector England needs, and this campaign will continue.

Sleep-ins

We were deeply disappointed in March 2021 with the outcome of the case between our member Claire Tomlinson-Blake and her employer, Mencap. In that case, we sought to establish that sleep-in shifts should attract the minimum wage. That case is lost, but we now turn to campaigning for a change in the law, and wrote jointly with Mencap to the prime Minister to seek this. This will be a continuing priority: sleeping-in workers are at the direction of their employer for the period of their shift, and we will continue to make this case.

Meeting housing needs

Following the publication of the Housing Manifesto in February 2020, we have continued to work to make the case for significant investment in affordable housing, particularly housing for social rent. We commissioned the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) to produce a report on good examples of councils meeting housing challenges, across GB. It showed examples of councils controlled by different political parties taking forward great programmes, and we publicised this widely hoping to encourage others to emulate them. We will continue this work in the year ahead.

Developing an efficient and effective union

The 2021 NEC election results were announced in June, with Saoirse Fanning and Kevin Jackson returned as the Community representatives, replacing John Gray and Denise Thomas. They have since given detailed written and verbal reports to the Community SGE on their work as NEC members.

The service group executive continued to meet as possible during the period of the pandemic, concentrating in particular upon work to support members with pandemic-related issues. And the three sector committees which report to it, covering major charities, housing associations and smaller scale CVS employers, met regularly and elected representatives to the main Executive. Their Autumn 2021 meetings were better attended than for a number of years and there was fruitful debate and information sharing.

The national CVS sector opened their November and January meetings to visitors to attend, to engage with a wider member of members who may be unfamiliar with the union's structures and work. We continue to liaise with and invite these members to meetings.

We produced a 'how to get to Community Conference' guide and have 20 visitors registered for the 2022 Community conference – a great first step and introduction for these members to be able to observe the democratic decision making of the union and hopefully get involved in the future.

The Community Service Group Executive

The committee are elected on a two-year cycle, the term of office began following the 2020 Special Delegate Conference. The committee have four full meetings per year plus one pre-conference meeting to discuss conference related issues only.

The Committee is serviced by Donna Rowe - Merriman, National Secretary, Andrew Dobbie, National Officer, Jane Ellis, Assistant National Officer (until February 2021), Haifa Rashed, Assistant National Officer (from June 2021) and Tas Georgiou, Team Secretary.

The members of the Community Service Group Executive are:

Seat	Name
Cymru/Wales Female	Vacant
Cymru/Wales General	Vacant
East Midlands Female	Vacant
East Midlands General	Vacant
Eastern Female	Vacant
Eastern General	Vacant
Greater London Female	Barbara Zagrodnizcek

Greater London General	John Bond (until January 2021); thereafter vacant
Northern Ireland Female	Saoirse Fanning (until June 2021)*
Northern Ireland General	Niall McCarroll
North West Female	Hanna English
North West General	Hassan Ortega
Northern Female	Vacant
Northern General	Malcolm Gray
Scotland Female	Tracy Hill
Scotland General	Vacant
Scotland Reserved	Vacant
South East Female	Helen Couchman
South East General	Kevin Jackson (until June 2021)*
South West Female	Vacant
South West General	Francis O’Ryan
West Midlands Female	Vacant
West Midlands General	James Hawker
Yorkshire and Humberside Female	Vacant
Yorkshire and Humberside General	Vacant

*Saoirse and Kevin were required by the union’s rules to step down from their elected regional roles when they were elected as the National Executive Council representatives for the Community Service Group. They continued to be members of the Service Group Executive.

Sector Representatives

Seat	Name
CVO sector reps (3)	Graeme Ellis Lesley Discombe Pat Jones
Housing Association sector reps (3)	Mark Jones Lynn Gillespie Carla Williams
Major Charities sector reps (3)	Kate Sharkey Karen Rickards Denise Thomas (from November 2021)

NEC members

John Gray (until June 2021)
Denise Thomas (until June 2021)
Saoirse Fanning (from June 2021)
Kevin Jackson (from June 2021)

Reports from Regions and Nations

Cymru Wales

UNISON's work by and for members in the service group has continued through the pandemic in much the way it started. With meetings, disciplinarys, grievances etc taking place online. As elsewhere the challenges have been to rapidly change focus on the issues as they have come up. From vaccinations to furlough etc.

The service group forum has continued to meet mostly online. During a brief respite from some of the most stringent restrictions, a very successful hybrid forum and AGM was held for the service group in Cardiff over the weekend 12th and 13th November.

This was a highly successful event, with the majority of attendees there in person, with limited others able to join online. This was the first occasion many of the Service Group membership had met in person since the Community Service Group's last physical conference in Cardiff just prior to the first lockdown. It was great to get back together and discuss the issues affecting our members, and draft motions and hold the AGM. We were also joined by the Regional Convenor team and NEC members.

The Keynote Speaker, Hannah Blythyn MS, Deputy Minister for Social Partnership joined us over TEAMS. The minister spoke to the forum about the new Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill and the opportunities for Trade Union concerns to be heard. The draft Bill included provisions to put social partnership in Wales on a formal footing by creating a social partnership council, strengthening socially responsible procurement and is seen as a progressive step. A discussion followed regarding the issues facing community members in the workplace. The forum also informed the minister of how this service group has long seen procurement as a key tool for the bettering of pay and terms and conditions in the sector. The forum also discussed issues such as sectoral pay with the minister.

The vast majority of Community members in Wales are held in the Ymlaen Branch. The branch has continued its work throughout the pandemic. Many of the day-to-day issues have been around TUPE, Members returning to workplaces and Covid safety, testing and vaccinations, as well as restructures and redundancies. The Branch are currently in the process of recruiting a caseworker and are looking forward to implementing CaseWeb and rolling out training.

East Midlands of England

We have 3,986 members in the Community Service group in the East Midlands this is a 3.5% increase in membership since 2020. There has also been an 8% increase in trained reps across the region.

Local campaigns included UNISON's End Violence at Work Charter, attending COP26 & fund our services rallies and ensuring thermometers are in place to check for safe working temperatures in libraries. A recognition agreement has been signed at Nottingham Women's Centre giving UNISON full bargaining rights for all staff they employ. The employer works across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire offering a range of formal services to women with mental health needs, women offenders, women who are seeking asylum, facing extreme poverty, escaping abuse or women simply wanting to make a change in their lives.

At St Andrew's Healthcare the employer commenced a consultations with staff to remove some historic Whitley Council terms & conditions in relation to pay protection and redundancy. This affects around 170 UNISON members employed by the charity. UNISON have secured a 3 years continuation for Whitley contracted staff and a decent provision for these staff at the end of the three years. Significantly we have also negotiated an increase in the redundancy and pay protection provision for all other staff. Over 80% of members voted to accept the deal.

Overall Aims for 2022

Increasing membership in the sector

Increasing reps in the sector

Increasing recognition agreements

Increasing facility time

Eastern England

This year in the Eastern Region we're campaigning for our members who work in social care. We all know that care workers carry out vital work in our communities, and the pandemic has shone a spotlight on the provision of care in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and throughout England and the UK. The caring workforce stepped up and put themselves, and their loved ones, at risk during the Covid pandemic, whilst they took care of the most vulnerable in society.

We ask for a real living wage as a minimum, occupational sick pay, covid-related sick pay.

Through the last year we have delivered a series of online learning events for our members ranging from health and safety, your rights at work, raising issues in the workplace, the environment, and many more topics. Through 2022 we continue to host ongoing online events for our members in this sector.

We have some new faces on our Eastern Region Community and Voluntary Service group, and, as always, welcome new members interested in joining this committee.

Greater London

Housing Associations Sector

Thanks to the upgrading of our IT systems just before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Branch was well prepared to face the challenges of increased casework and remote working. To meet the increased needs of members it became necessary to recruit additional Branch Officer and a Branch Manager.

Across the last two years, the Branch had many successes in supporting members. More recently, it focused on raising awareness of employment rights and responsibilities in relation to COVID-19 vaccinations, which resulted in very low number of people who lost their jobs.

The Branch actively works with members on the End Violence at Work Campaign. As a result, several major employers including Notting Hill Genesis, Thames Reach and L&Q signed up to the Charter. In the last few months, the Branch increased promoting good workplace practices to help members during menopause and is already having successes on the field - commitment to support from Thames Reach and signing off policy by One Housing Group.

To enable a much more structured approach to local negotiations and communications about ongoing workplace issues at the employer level, the Branch supported members to create Employer Based Committees. They've been successfully established at all major employers including Clarion Housing, Optivo, L&Q, One Housing and NHG.

Last year the Branch successfully organized its first virtual AGM with Sem Moema, Mayoral Advisor in Hackney as a guest speaker. This year it invited David Lammy, Shadow Foreign Secretary and Labour Member of Parliament for Tottenham. The Branch also hosts regular activists' meetings for all of those who would like to get more involved, especially as workplace reps and Health and Safety reps.

Community and Voluntary Sector

Beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges. The membership suddenly rose from an average of 60 new members a month, to 85-90 and in some periods it reached to even 100 new joiners. That automatically translated to increased casework, mostly related to use of personal protective equipment, being paid when self-isolating or off sick and more recently vaccinations. In September/ October 2021 the numbers started to return to normal drop, but there are still new joiners every month.

After a period of shortages in the staffing levels, the Branch recently employed two full time case workers and it is now starting to focus on recruiting more workplace reps. Thanks to very successful Health & Safety Campaign, the number of H&S reps tripled.

The Branch had very successful AGM last year. It also started to have virtual all members meetings. The last one took place in November 2021. Among the guest speakers were Christina McAnea, UNISON General Secretary and Andrew Dobbie, UNISON National Officer for Community Sector. The event had a great turnaround, and the Branch is already planning to host another one in April 2022

Northern England

The past two years has seen incredible demands put on the community and voluntary sector both nationally and in the Northern Region. The crisis caused by Covid 19 has exacerbated a number of issues that the sector already faced, including inadequate funding, ownership instability and a recruitment crisis. The period has seen the region focus on providing support and building membership in the sector. Branches have taken lead roles in supporting members and negotiation on their behalf.

Social Care

The sector was put under considerable pressure during the pandemic, which exposed members and patients to unacceptable levels of risk. Though some issues have been addressed a lot still remain. The region has prioritised the sector and initiated a project to support members working in care homes, contacting all members via telephone. This led to an ability to identify problem employers and challenge bad practice, especially in relation to PPE and Health and Safety early on. In addition, it gave invaluable information about the sector.

The period saw an increase in membership and the development of regular contact with key employers within the region. There has also been an increase in case work within the sector, particularly with the introduction of regulations

that those working in Care Quality Commission regulated care homes in England have to be double vaccinated. Support is being provided to this group of members and cases collated and referred to Thompsons Solicitors as appropriate.

Recruiting, Organising, and Retaining members

Throughout the period branches are focused on recruitment within this sector and developing activists. The information we have is that recruitment and retention is still positive. That said there is high level of staff turnover especially in the Social Care Sector, with employees moving to different homes, other care sector roles or other low-paid work in the sector. This will continue as long as levels of pay and conditions are so low, especially compared to other employers who recruit into low-paid work, e.g., the retail sector. This does lead to difficulty in organising within the social care sector. The region is looking at ways to address this issue in the long term.

Regional C&V Group

Though there have been difficulties in organising meetings during the pandemic, the region is organising the members in this sector to have regular meetings, potentially building round the different employers within the sector. The region has begun the process to implement this and developing an annual action planning linked to recruitment and campaigning.

Campaigning

Members have encouraged to become involved in a range of campaigns. These have included opposition to the Police, Crime & Sentencing Bill, the Nationality and Borders Bill, and promoting activists around COP26.

Northern Ireland

The Regional Community Service Group continues to receive representation from UNISON Community and Voluntary Sector Branch NI, Regional Disabled Members, Regional Women's Committee, Regional Black Members, LGBT+ Self Organised Groups, and Service Group Executive Members.

The Regional Service Group continues to have active representation on and participates in Regional Council, Regional Committee and attend Regional Self Organised Groups.

Complimenting all the above, Saoirse Fanning our Joint Branch Secretary was successfully elected to the National Community Female Seat on the NEC, 2021-2023 which was a significant development for our branch membership, delivering a powerful voice for Community members across UNISON and of course in our region.

COMMUNITY BRANCH SUCCESSES

Community Branch Activists delivered significant successes for our members over the recent period, organising on a platform of radical trade union campaigning, building up a culture of solidarity across the region, reaching into an increasing number of workplaces and areas across the region.

1. £500 RECOGNITION PAYMENT

UNISON Frontline Supporting People Programme Workers all received a £500 Recognition Payment for the sacrifices and commitments they made during the Covid-19 pandemic. Delivering much needed support and guidance to at risk members of the community.

2. SICK PAY ENHANCEMENT

UNISON Community Branch Members who are employed within Apex Housing Association and Triangle Housing Association received a huge boost when their contractual sick pay entitlement was increased from 1 week a year to 3 months full sick pay in any 12-month period.

3. PAY UPLIFT

A 20% pay increase was awarded to UNISON Community Branch Members employed with First Housing Aid and Support Services, along with an increase in mileage allowances from 27p to 45p.

RECRUITMENT RETENTION AND ORGANISING

We have 1900 C&V Sector members with eight Accredited Reps servicing and supporting branch membership. Recruitment remains steady throughout the year. The need for more accredited Workplace and Health and Safety Representatives is always a priority.

Developing and maximising engagement and representation on a local and regional level remains an ongoing challenge. Factors such as lack of union recognition, working time constraints and release time for activists all hinder Community members from playing a more meaningful role in building and delivering on our union's aims and objectives.

UNISON - THERE FOR YOU

The Branch Committee contributed £11,115 to the UNISON There for You charity. Maintaining and further strengthening our commitment to stand as one and in solidarity with our fellow UNISON colleagues across all branches, service groups and regions.

FREE SCHOOL MEALS CAMPAIGN

UNISON Community Branch were privileged to contribute of £500 toward the inspirational and truly grassroots led UNISON NI Free School Means Campaign. Calling for Free School Meals for every child who attends school here in our region.

- **CAMPAIGNS**

SUPPORTING PEOPLE CAMPAIGN

The Supporting People Campaign is remains ongoing, organising and communicating with our branch membership, service providers, politicians, and government departments being a central theme and strategy. A grassroots trade union campaign which continues to provide a voice for frontline workers employed through this funding stream. Calling for improved in terms and conditions of employment and demanding an end to the undervaluing of these essential frontline workers.

£500 RECOGNITION PAYMENT CAMPAIGN

Branch Activists launched a campaign calling for a special recognition payment of £500 to made be paid to all frontline C&V Sector frontline workers. Following a sustained and well support campaign we successfully secured for all frontline Supporting People Programme funded worker. We are continuing to call for a similar payment for C&V Sector workers.

WOMENS SECTOR CAMPAIGN

Campaigning on behalf of women community workers, who find themselves largely low paid, overworked and undervalued. The campaign focuses on organising and recruiting within the women's sector, determined to improve the treatment of women in the workplace, demanding, enhanced terms and conditions of employment, better work life balance and life opportunities for our branch membership employed in this sector.

COMMUNITY GROUPS CAMPAIGN

UNISON Community Branch members working primarily within specific community group settings are among the lowest paid frontline workers across the sector, with union membership density very low and trade union organising non-existent, or at the least ineffective in addressing the issues around pay and equality. This branch driven campaign aims to reach non-unionised workers, developing and amplifying their collective voice towards change.

- **RECOGNITION AGREEMENTS**

Regionally we have partnership agreements with Apex Housing Association, Ballymagoarty, Hazelbank Community Partnership, DePaul Ireland, First Housing Aid and Support Services, Newington Housing Association and Simon Community

Workplace Representatives are completing excellent progressive trade unionism within these employers, improving the lives of our members, standing up and demanding, respect, equality, safe working environments and challenging all forms of harassment and bullying.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Fundamental to our branch function is our commitment and solidarity with international calls for justice, equality, and worker's rights. Solidarity affiliations continue with - Justice for Colombia, Cuban Solidarity Campaign and Palestine Solidarity Campaigns.

COLLABORATION WITH THE WIDER TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

UNISON Community Branch members take up key roles in the Belfast & District Trades Union Council and Derry Trades Union Council. Branch members when called upon, joined our colleagues in Unite, UCU and NIPSA on their respective picket lines, supporting their demands for fair pay and decent terms and conditions of employment.

- ***Our Values***

Community Branch Members, active within the branch committee continue to grow our visibility in the region through social media, press statements and other forms of engagement with the wider branch membership. Declaring our position, values, and commitment to Community Sector Workers, based on the values of democracy and social justice

Above all else our unflinching radical approach to resolving issues for our members and supporting their demands makes us a force and a powerful advocate for workers across our region and seen as the trade union branch Community workers contact when they need support and representation.

North West of England

Regional Community Service Group

The Regional Service Group continues to have active representation on, and participates in the work of, a range of regional bodies including Regional Council, Regional Committee and Regional Organising Committee. Our members also attend Regional Self Organised Group Committees and Labour Link to ensure that there is regular exchange of information and that our priorities inform their work and campaigns. Similarly, we also meet with other Service Group leads and our Regional Management Team on a regular basis.

Recruitment and retention

Latest figures demonstrate a disproportionate number of leavers following two unprecedented growth spikes (largely in social care) during the pandemic. The region is looking at setting disaggregated joiner / leaver / growth targets for our service group for 2022 and utilising the regional Adapt To Win digital toolkit to improve our reach and address our recruitment and retention objectives.

Activity Fortnights

Community Activity Fortnights took place in 2021 and 2022 linking recruitment and retention with capacity building across our members in social care, charities and housing associations. Activity took place in Social Care via our UNISON NW Social Care Newsletter with focus on promoting the Stand Up for Social Care Campaign, encouraging members and supporters to write to their councillors in support of the campaign, and to build and grow the Stand Up for Social Care Facebook Group along with a number of themed webinars.

In Housing Associations, this included a new UNISON NW Housing Newsletter, the launch of a UNISON NW Housing Association Survey to identify the key issues housing staff face and to determine pay, campaigning and bargaining priorities. 2022 Activity Fortnight focussed on the voluntary sector and the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Housing Associations

Our organisation, presence and bargaining power in housing services across Local Government and Community has declined as a result of fragmentation from stock transfers and the creation of Arms Length Management Organisations and other delivery models, highlighting the need for more intense recruitment and retention activity across both Service Groups. Regionally, we have been exploring joint working with the Local Government Service Group to address this and how we can base-build, both in statutory services and Registered Social Landlords. Across the region Housing Association membership has seen a reduction on previous years' figures - indicating definite scope for further organising and development activity for branches and the region.

Erosion of the democratic element within Housing Association boards (often as a result of mergers) in the region continues to be of concern, with some Housing Associations gradually reducing the number of local authority board members – a key indicator that they are following the general direction of travel within the sector.

Entry-level pay for staff is still high on our agenda and UNISON has been working closely with the Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign to promote the Real Living Wage amongst housing providers across the 10 Greater Manchester authorities. With increasing numbers of mergers, the erosion of terms and conditions along with reductions in staffing levels and other changes resulting from the pandemic, organising in this sector remains a key priority.

Stand Up for Social Care

The region is now in year 6 of its 10-year regional/branch match-funded social care organising project and over the period of this report we have seen some significant gains. The Care Workers for Change Campaign (CW4C) was re-badged as Care Workers vs COVID-19 and (in response to the developing pandemic) it emerged as Stand Up for Social Care. The campaign sits within our ongoing strategic aims within social care to focus and increase our influence

within commissioning authorities and build towards the eventual insourcing of social care services.

This campaign is mobilising our 20,000+ social care members across all relevant service groups to reinforce commitment to the Ethical Care Charter and demand that local authorities strengthen social value commissioning to include specific measures for payment of the Real Living Wage, occupational sick pay, hourly rates for sleep-ins and travel time, and trade union recognition and access. Pivotal to the campaign is that companies must no longer profit from public funds by attacking the terms and conditions of our members.

The campaign has successfully met its targets of substantial commitments around improved pay and terms and conditions; ensuring the safety of frontline care workers through the identification, escalation and resolution of issues; increased political engagement; increased membership and activism; and building effective organising structures in 'lock-down' and the subsequent health crisis.

We were able to capitalise on an effective social media strategy and a large cohort of supportive Labour MP's, Elected Mayors and Local Authorities in order to ensure that our campaign against iniquitous pay and conditions, particularly around the National Minimum Wage/Sleep-Ins issue, the payment of sick pay for Covid-19 related absences, access to PPE and testing.

Early in the pandemic careworkers were surveyed to understand the impact of the crisis on the sector. Dr Lydia Hayes of the University of Kent in conjunction with Social Care Regulation at Work (funded by the Wellcome Trust) undertook analysis of the respondents to the UNISON NW survey, which was widely publicised. Publication of the survey outcomes were part of the broader campaign to get North West Councils to commit to higher standards similar to those previously secured from Salford Council.

The region also launched a Stand Up for Social Care Councillors' Network organising sympathetic councillors to advance these demands and develop proposals for in-sourcing social care services.

All North West commissioning councils were contacted to push for widespread adoption of the Foundation Living Wage following publication of the new rate and is being pursued by branches via our local bargaining machinery.

Our learning from this on-going campaign has informed UNISON's over-arching social care strategy and continues to underpin the union's work on keeping the issue of social care high up on our national agenda.

Disputes/Industrial Action

Community members have been involved in a number of disputes including over the 2020-22 period:

We Are With You (formerly known as Addaction)

Staff working in Wigan and Leigh were transferred to Addaction when it took full control of Wigan Council's substance misuse service in 2018. Addaction was subsequently re-branded "We Are With You". Staff were employed directly by the NHS previously but Addaction/ We Are With You refused to pay them the nationally agreed pay rise (Agenda for Change) rates for NHS staff.

Finally, after 15 months in dispute and 26 days of strike action staff secured a no detriment payment that matches the NHS Agenda for Change three year pay deal which runs from April 2018 to April 2021, meaning that workers will each receive several thousand pounds worth of back pay. In addition, they have negotiated a further year of protection which will ensure that the rehab workers will not be paid below the current NHS rates until April 2022.

Additionally, the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC) declared UNISON to be the recognised union for We Are With You workers in Wigan and Leigh.

Alternative Futures Group (AFG) - Support Workers Against the Cuts

Work continues with members in Alternative Futures Group (AFG), which is commissioned by a number of North West councils, and the employer has faced a serious backlash over a proposal it calls "A Chance for Change" which it says will "change the enhanced terms and conditions for our support workers".

The AFG CEO wrote to MPs and councillors across the North West in an attempt to make the case for the 'reforms'. In response, and thanks to the work of our regional Stand Up For Social Care team, the CEO received an open letter (signed by 21 MPs and 63 councillors), condemning the proposals and criticising the organisation for setting an "ambition" to pay all of its staff the living wage, rather than making a binding pledge and asked him to: accept higher fee rates across all local authority areas and commit to paying the Foundation Living Wage in those areas; clarify the rate required to enable payment of the FLW and the above minimum standards including a comprehensive breakdown of how the money would be spent; confirm that the terms and conditions of workers will be protected as part of the 'Chance for Change' programme; to recognise UNISON and work with the Stand Up for Social Care Campaign to achieve the increase in commissioners funding and decrease AFG overheads required to achieve the above minimum standards in AFG.

The campaign continues in response to these major cuts proposed by AFG which also include the threat to fire and re-hire.

Fiona Mercer v Alternative Futures Group (AFG) Ltd and Others

Fiona Mercer had been involved in organising, and subsequently took part in a long-running dispute over AFG's plans to cut payment for sleep-in shifts undertaken by its care staff. Fiona was disciplined, suspended, and prevented from going into work by her employer. AFG's heavy-handed tactics meant she and many of her care worker colleagues were put off from taking part in the strike action.

UNISON and Fiona had originally taken North-West based charity AFG to an employment tribunal in Manchester in May 2020. UNISON argued that Article

11 of the European Convention on Human Rights – incorporated into UK law in the 1998 Human Rights Act – protects workers involved in legal disputes against their employer, meaning they should not be disciplined or treated unfairly in some other way, because they had taken part in industrial action. However, the tribunal found that although the Trade Union Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 wasn't compatible with international human rights law, it wouldn't be taking further action. UNISON appealed, and the EAT found in Fiona's favour.

On 2 June 2021 the Employment Appeal Tribunal judgment was handed down confirming that employers will no longer be able to get away with mistreating employees who take part in union-organised workplace disputes. UK law had previously prevented employers from sacking staff involved in strike action or other workplace disputes, but not from disciplining or making life difficult for them. Now, disciplinary action against workers who go on strike will be unlawful.

Lifeways

Lifeways Group is the UK's largest supported living provider and commissioned by a number of NW councils including Lancashire County Council, Bolton, Manchester, Wirral and Liverpool.

In late 2020, Lifeways Care members contacted their local UNISON reps for advice regarding underpayment of holiday-pay. Members were aware that they should be receiving holiday-pay based on average pay received and not just basic pay. It was quickly established that their employer had not factored in sleep-in shifts and overtime when calculating holiday-pay.

The collective grievance was supported by almost 200 members from across the region and was lodged just before Christmas 2020. After a 6-month campaign, in April 2021 Lifeways issued members with schedules of holiday pay enhancements. This was only achieved by support worker members in Lifeways standing together and challenging their employer collectively which has ensured Lifeways have started to pay holiday pay enhancements; ensured Lifeways understand the impact that non-payment has had on their personal and family life; started the legal process to protect their rights and won the backing of over 80 local Councillors and MP's;

UNISON NW conducted a payday survey of care workers employed by Lifeways across the region: 72% of respondents reported that being paid incorrectly by Lifeways Group in last 6 months, with 26% paid incorrectly every month. It also revealed the significant impacts that underpayment has on care workers with 71% of those paid incorrectly said it had a negative impact on their health, whilst 41% said it had impacted upon their relationship with their partner/children.

The financial impact of Lifeways Group's underpayment was significant: 44% of those paid incorrectly had fallen behind on household bills with 57% had been forced to ask family and/or friends for financial help.

The survey underpinned the North West's existing work with Lifeways members' campaign to be paid the going rate for the job and Lifeways members have shown that companies who refuse to pay their staff correctly will be held to account by their staff.

The "Salford Offer"

The "Salford Offer" funded by the NHS and Salford City Council was secured in order to provide assurances to care workers who would not be able to work as a result of the pandemic. It ensured that they would not suffer a reduction in wages, but also contained other public health measures. The offer extended to all social care providers in the city not just those commissioned by the City Council. However, some providers did not avail themselves of the offer or advise their staff of its existence. With assistance from the City Mayor, local MP's and portfolio holders we were successful in putting pressure on providers such as HC-One, CIC and Creative Support, who were initially resistant to its implementation.

Anchor Hanover

Anchor Hanover the largest provider of specialist housing and care for older people in England was one of the few social care providers operating in Salford that refused to pass the "Salford Offer" funding on to its care workers, despite it costing them nothing. In response, Salford City UNISON organised a campaign, launched a petition and wrote to the council. The campaign culminated in a community action involving Greater Manchester Citizens, care workers, councillors, local MP Rebecca Long-Bailey and other community supporters and took place in 2021 Living Wage Week, outside of one of the provider's care homes in Salford. Finally, Anchor Hanover announced that they would be paying care workers the real living wage, meaning that employees will be paid at least £9.90, almost £1 an hour more than the current national minimum wage rate of £8.91 which many Anchor Hanover care workers were on.

The huge uplift is thought to be worth up to £19 million a year for employees of the company.

In-Sourcing initiatives

July 2020 saw the launch (via webinar) of "Who Cares? Reinventing Adult Social Care: Insourcing and Restoring the Public Good" prepared by a Scrutiny Panel established by the Social Care and Health Select Committee of Liverpool City Council with contributions by the Foundational Economy Group; the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE); Professor Lydia Hayes- lead researcher for Social Care Regulation at Work and University of Kent; Liverpool MPs Paula Barker and Kim Johnson; and testimony from care workers in UNISON.

The report examined the experience of care workers; the financialisation of the sector; the legal framework governing adult social care; challenges and opportunities for insourcing; alternative models of service delivery; the pandemic and social care; the funding of social care and the next steps for the sector.

In October 2021, Cheshire West & Chester council agreed to bring 600 care workers working for provider Vivo (an arm's length subsidiary of the council) in-house from 2022. Halton and Trafford councils have also stepped in to take over care homes.

In November 2021, UNISON NW gave evidence to Liverpool City Region All Party Parliamentary Group of parliamentarians and civic leaders on the obstacles facing the delivery of pay and conditions for the social care workforce, including inconsistent fee rates across local authorities, demonstrating how the absence of a standard approach can undermine pay and conditions.

Work continues on Salford City Council's Insourcing Commission, on the back of City Mayor Paul Dennett's election commitment to explore the direct delivery of all public services. Correctly in our view, Mayor Dennett recognises that social care must be a priority area for consideration and agreement has been reached with UNISON locally and regionally for representation on the Commission from Salford City UNISON Branch Secretary, UNISON North West Head of Social Care, Professor Lydia Hayes, Mo Baines from APSE and two frontline care worker UNISON activists, one of whom is recently elected NEC Community member Julia Mwaluke.

Greater Manchester Care Workers Demand a Pay Rise

Launched on 15 November 2021 (to coincide with Living Wage Week) and in collaboration with GM Citizens and the Living Wage Foundation, Greater Manchester's UNISON care and support workers called on Manchester's ten local authorities to require the Foundation Living Wage as a minimum starting salary for all directly employed and commissioned care and support workers; requested Metro Mayor Andy Burnham to work with us to deliver the Foundation Living Wage as a minimum starting salary for all of Greater Manchester's care and support workers; and on members of the public to hold local councillors to account and stand with us in our campaign for a pay rise. A number of events took place across the combined authority after the launch of the campaign by Community Member Danielle Dolan (NEC).

Labour Link/Political

We continue to use our political lobbying and campaigning strength to support Community members in dispute with their employers and have successfully secured the support of the North West members of the Parliamentary Labour Party, Shadow Cabinet members and Labour elected Mayors on a range of disputes and initiatives involving Community members both locally and nationally.

Covid meetings continued throughout last year with the two Metro Mayors of Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester. There has been a joint campaign between the Mayors and the unions to secure a scheme that would provide full take-home pay for people who had been contacted by track-and-trace and were being expected to quarantine for 14 days. Track and trace was being compromised by individuals who simply could not afford to lose two weeks' pay. The NW survey of Care Workers at the beginning of the pandemic highlighted this problem, as up to 80% of care workers who responded said that

they would have to go into work even if they were showing the signs of Covid as they would not get paid if they did not.

Additionally, our cohort of North West MP's have been instrumental in raising a range of issues both inside and outside parliament in support of the regional disputes, campaigns and Coronavirus –related issues affecting Community members.

Self Organisation

North West Community members continue to play a full and active part in Womens, LGBT+, Disabled, Black Members and Young Members Self Organisation at branch, regional and national levels, ensuring that our priorities are reflected in their campaigning and bargaining agendas.

Wider community engagement

Coronavirus has significantly influenced our physical involvement in a range of community activities, throughout the reporting period. Community members have been active in support of a wide range of initiatives across the North West which has seen us participating in a host of digital events including LGBT+ Virtual Pride, the Climate Crisis/Green economy, Mandela 67 events, international solidarity webinars with the people of Palestine, Cuba and Venezuela, the Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign, Hazards Campaign H&S webinars, a number of GM Citizens UK initiatives and a range of other campaigns. This participation enables us to extend the reach of our organising and recruitment agendas as trade unionists, enhances our capacity to effect change and positively influence the agendas of the community organisations we work with.

Whatever the 'New Normal' looks like as we work through the Coronavirus experience, the North West is ready to respond!

Scotland

Like all other regions of the UK, Community members in Scotland were hit hard by Covid right from the starting point of the pandemic. It was clear to the activists and staff in the region that an urgent plan of action was required to protect members Health & Safety (H&S) and earnings at work.

We quickly introduced a H&S Pack that was launched alongside bespoke training for activists and members across Scotland. Organisers and activists were tasked with recruiting members onto this H&S training and equipping them with the knowledge they needed to carry out inspections in the workplace. The work delivered on H&S by our activists who were already busier than they had

ever been allowed us to engage proactively with employers around issues like PPE and Risk Assessments across Social Care.

Another aspect of our work around H&S was that we were able to negotiate increased facility time in employers where we have recognition to allow joint work around the pandemic to be prioritised.

As this work was underway, we opened discussions with Scottish Government about a scheme that would ensure social care staff who were shielding or self-isolating be paid their normal pay. Too many Community employers in Scotland only pay SSP as standard and the subsequent Social Care Staff Support Fund allowed staff to receive full pay for any covid related absences. This scheme is currently slated to run until 31 March 2022 and has been pivotal in safeguarding our members and service users.

As deaths in care homes and indeed the community began to add up we were able to demonstrate that employers who recognised trade unions had much better Health & Safety records and engaged much better with public health requirements generally. It became clear that we were pushing on an open door in terms of reform of the sector and two strands of work grew from there. Firstly, the Fair Work in Social Care Group was fast tracked to look at terms & conditions, funding, and effective voice across the sector with a view to reporting to the Scottish Government. Secondly, the Scottish Government commissioned an Independent Review into Adult Social Care, commonly known as the Feeley Report.

Both of these pieces of work moved through 2021 with the Feeley Report resulting in the Scottish Government issuing a consultation on a National Care Service (NCS). Work carried out by a group of Community and social care reps in their dealings with Andrew Feeley throughout his review had a real positive impact on the Scottish Governments plans for the NCS. However, there are still challenges ahead and whilst the proposed NCS has the potential to deliver many gains to our members through possible sectoral bargaining and a better approach to training and development, it is not proposed to operate like the NHS and will instead be a different way of commissioning services, allowing for the continuation of private profit in the social care sector.

In the face of the changing landscape of a potential NCS, a staffing crisis across Community, the continued low pay of our members, and a lack of depth in our organised members in the sector our workplan for 2021 was ambitious.

1. To produce a series of briefings for members/activists on the NCS, Fair Work, and other relevant issues
 - to date there has been 8 briefings produced and distributed.
2. To implement a digital organising approach to organising the sector
 - We have a new Digital Comms team in place who are using Digital Organising techniques when interacting with members online, creating lists of potential activists for follow up conversations.
3. To produce a campaign calendar of issues
 - This is being produced in conjunction with our lay leadership on an

issue by issue basis, and then broken down by the Social Care Organising Team into the individual actions.

4. To improve the democratic structure of social care in general within the region, including Community members
 - a new interim Social Care Committee has been created to allow direct lay leadership on all NCS issues including sectoral bargaining.
5. To create a Learning & Organising pathway for new reps identified in Community such as introductory webinars, specific tailored briefings and training.
 - this has been introduced and we have designed bespoke introductory and training packages which have had good attendance from across Scotland. We are also exploring a flexible stewards training course to encourage attendance from workers who have rota pressures. We have also reviewed 2020's H&S training and have a new Community specific version.
6. Create and improve the current data gathering around recruitment numbers, activism etc
 - This is co-ordinated centrally and covers all service groups and branches with a social care / Community element and logs all new activists and contacts who have been brought into the union through our campaigns throughout the year and will be expanded in 2022 to look at recruitment generally.

This approach in 2021 resulted in in our highest ever response to a survey (Staff Shortages survey, 2,550 responses) which we used to build our activism in the sector, adding 44 members who have either become stewards or who have committed to undertaking their stewards training.

It is clear that there is much to do in Community in Scotland over the coming years as we inch closer to a NCS, but we are well placed to deliver for members in 2022 and beyond.

South East of England

With the continuing pandemic the group's members have been hit hard with social care suffering the most given the nature of the service , members have struggled to maintain services and there have been closures in the South East Region due to staffing issues caused by the toxic combination of poor pay and conditions and covid 19. However the group has been considering the issue of how to organise and recruit particularly in social care and will be considering proposals at it's March meeting as to how best organise members in social care so that they feel included in the unio and can take part in a meaningful way.

The pandemic and the changes we needed to make to adjust to the lock down restrictions have provoked debate and discussion as to how best improve recruitment and organisation within the region and ensure participation and long standing policies and practices are being examined and challenged , there will

be change and it will not always work out as we think but if we are to meet the challenges of recruiting and organising a largely part time female work force particularly in social care then change we must.

The group will be concentrating on the organising challenge in 2022 and rebuilding its activity, it meets four times a year and it hopes to be able to re start physical meetings this year covid public health measures permitting.

South West of England

Regional Community Service Group meetings

We continue to organise these across the South West Region, however they are currently poorly attended, and thus we have minimal updates from members across the region. We will therefore be doing more work together with regional staff across the next 12 months to increase attendance.

Sirona

Following discussions at regional and national level it was agreed to move 350 members from Sirona out of community to the health group. This was because they have agenda for change terms and conditions and the region was keen to offer then a vote in the national ballot that took place.

Brandon Trust

The trust has offered a loyalty payment of £200 after tax for all staff to be paid before Christmas to thank staff for the work over the last year. We have put a pay claim in for 5% for all staff.

Pay In Social Care

It is clear the next year will be very difficult with commissioners only talking about 2/3% increases on hourly rates and inflation predicted to hit 5% early in the year and the tax increases in April.

Vaccines

The decision to make vaccinations mandatory within social care settings worsened the staffing crisis within the sector. Members were supported with formal processes and requests for advice as they came forward.

Milestones

A specialist dementia home closure due to bed vacancies and lack of beds being commissioned by local authorities. This is resulting in 59 job losses although the employer is confident that the vast majority of staff can be redeployed due to vacancies in other homes.

Bromford

An exit from the LGPS for staff who are still active members. The vast majority of staff are not in the LGPS – so industrially we are in a weak position, with low membership numbers even in the group of staff impacted by this proposal. We

are still in the consultation period on this. It may come to a hire and rehire type scenario.

Somerset Care

Somerset Care- offer of £10.50 as lowest pay with effect 01 Feb 2022, currently out at ballot with members. This was offered just before Christmas. Plans to submit a pay claim covering the rest of the aspirations including maintaining/appropriate differentials following extensive workplace consultations.

Discovery

A pay claim has been submitted which includes asking for £10.50 for Support Workers/Assistants (plus 3 domestics/handypersons) and to maintain appropriate differentials. Discovery are aware of what other providers in Somerset are proposing to pay, and the expectation is that the first part of the pay claim should be met.

Workplace pay consultations

A bid was made to the Regional Finance Committee which included for the cost of an ice cream van to visit Somerset Care and Discovery workplaces throughout November and December to encourage staff to fill in the pay consultation surveys, to help inform the pay claims. This was hugely successful with hundreds of surveys completed for each employer and over 60 new members combined, plus leads for activists which are being followed up.

West Midlands of England

Along with colleagues in other regions I believe we came into 2021 feeling fairly positive. The sector had suffered terribly and worked so hard through 2020, that 2021 had to be better? There was a vaccination programme underway, there was a promise of increased funding and investment in the sector, and it felt like there was a potential way forward.

Fast forward 12 months and the position is not only unchanged but in fact worse. We have seen an exodus of staff from care due to the government's insistence on continuing mandatory vaccination in CQC regulated homes. With limited opportunity for redeployment in care environments it was a difficult time, and many committed long term staff left the sector. For those who we could manage to negotiate redeployment many will now also be affected by the recent extension of the mandatory vaccination requirement into all social care so we will be representing them in the same process again.

We also experienced various providers making changes to terms and conditions - specifically changes to short-term working and lay off clauses - as they were caught out when covid-19 first impacted. We have sought to minimise the impact of these where possible and negotiated changes to protect members should these circumstances occur in the future.

The usual cycle of TUPE and redundancies as well as disciplinaries and grievances has kept the Regional Branch busy with approximately 2000+ cases and queries registered with us this year.

The Regional community membership remained fairly stable which given the aforementioned increasing in leavers is encouraging. The Branch has plans to work with the regional office in increasing activist engagement and recruitment across the next year.

Yorkshire and Humberside

It has been a very challenging two years in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. Resources both of branches and of the regional structures have been focused on supporting members facing the impacts of COVID, both in terms of advice for members in unprecedented circumstances, such as having to work on the frontline despite COVID risks or having to recreate an office environment in their own homes.

Regional community members have played an active part in the Service Groups Community and Housing Association sector committees, bringing the experience of members in our region to these sectors. Negotiations across a range of employers have been supported with a range of outcomes: the Leeds-based Canal and Rivers Trust radically cut back on its office estate, but in negotiations we were able to secure hybrid working for all staff, a compensation payment reflecting the loss of office provision and expenses arrangements meaning those needing to travel further for work would not be out of pocket. We also secured inflation-matching increases in wages in 2020 and 2021, with more for the lower paid in 2020.

Taking forward decisions of 2020 Community Conference

In the exceptional circumstances of the pandemic, SGE and officer resources have had to be allocated to supporting members faced with the exceptional pressures they have faced at work, and the work programme evolved at speed across the period. Conference decisions were therefore a key driver for activity, but not the central, dominant component of the work programme they are in a normal year.

Motion number and title; actions contained in motion	Actions taken
<p>M1. Engaging Branches in the Community Sector in LGBT+ Recruitment and Organising.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to raise awareness of the remit of the LGBT+ Self Organised Group amongst branches with members within the community sector in the light of new national rules 2. Continue to work towards making organising, events, policies, systems, language and good practice advice inclusive of LGBT+ members. 3. Work with Health and Local Government Service Group Executives to encourage branches with members in the community service group to build LGBT+ recruitment and bargaining into their work plans. 	<p>We have continued to raise awareness of ways to promote the work, materials and remit of the LGBT+ self-organised group to members. Most notably in an equality-focused news letter to all community members including material developed by the LGBT+ Committee and supporting officers.</p>
<p>M 2 Recruitment and Organising: Building Community Links</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to develop and highlight working partnerships with organisations which share UNISON's campaigning objectives. 2. Promote the work of Citizens UK and other community capacity-building organisations and the linked benefits to Community membership, recruitment and organising. 3. Highlight examples of good practice in partnership working which have benefitted the recruitment, retention and organising of Community Service Group members. 	<p>Work on this important objective has been filtered through the lens of COVID over this period. We have worked closely within the Future Social Care Coalition to assemble a cross-party and cross-organisation group for the changes we need to see in social care. UNISON NW resources on their joint working shared to other regions February 2022.</p>

<p>M 3 Health and Safety Representatives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to work with the National Health and Safety Committee to ensure that the issues raised by Community members are contained within their bargaining agenda. 2. Continue to work with regions and branches to prioritise the recruitment of Health and Safety representatives within their recruitment strategies in the Community sector. 3. Regularly disseminate information about the role and function of Health and Safety representatives to members in Community demonstrating the linkages to our bargaining issues. 4. Continue to reinforce the vital role of Health and Safety representatives through the roll out of the End Violence at Work Charter 	<p>Central union has delivered new events aimed at potential H&S reps, whose numbers have increased, including within Community. Tracy Hill continues to ensure that National H&S committee give enough prominence to Community considerations in its work. We continued to accredit organisations to the Violence at Work Charter.</p>
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<p>M 4 Racism in Community Workplaces</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with UNISON National Black Members Committee and Community employers to identify best practice on tackling racism in the workplace, and highlight Community organisations which have successfully implemented counter racism measures. 2. Publicise these measures and examples with UNISON reps and activists in the Community Sector, encouraging them to talk to employers about how racism affects Black staff in Community workplaces and further publicising UNISON bargaining and negotiating guides on best practice around race discrimination. 3. Repeat the racism in the workplace survey in the Community Sector, in 2021 to see if there has been any change in the prevalence of racism in Community workplaces. 4. Work with regions and branches and Learning and Organising Services (LAOS) to ensure that workplace representatives, activists and stewards in the Community Service Group are aware of, and able to implement the Race Discrimination Protocol. 	<p>We have worked closely with the NBMC, sharing resources and materials developed by them in particular through an Equality-focused e-bulletin issued in 2020, and another in Winter 2021. We will be repeating the Racism in the Workplace carried out in 2019 during 2022. We will continue to support black reps in carrying out their roles and all reps in supporting Black members, drawing on the work of the NBMC.</p>
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<p>M 5 Community Services for Women – A Lifeline Removed</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Full equality impact assessments of all funding cuts to community services and particularly women’s services; 2) Where inequalities are identified, a requirement to address these and demonstrate commitment to gender responsive budgeting; 3) A clear strategy on the part of the Government to deliver on public political commitments made to tackle the inequalities between men and women. 	<p>We have continued to promote the importance of equality impact assessment. We have worked closely with the National Women’s Committee to support their work, including in organising a session at Community 2021 to enable members to learn more about their campaigning work on domestic violence.</p>
<p>M 6 Community Employers, Accessibility Passports and Access to Work</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Encourage branches with community members to negotiate for workplace adjustment agreements and passports with community employers 2) Publicise UNISON’s new Reasonable Adjustments Bargaining Guide and Accessibility Passport to branches and regions 3) Publicise UNISON’s Quick Guide to Access to Work to branches, regions and members. 	<p>We circulated the referenced guidance to all branches with community members and publicised it to all members via an e-bulletin, encouraging negotiation for reasonable adjustments and disability leave.</p>

<p>M 7 Sleeping In, Losing Out</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with UNISON Labour Link, NEC and other stakeholders including lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to highlight the particular problem of unsafe, unclean and inadequate conditions for people carrying out overnight sleep-in shifts. 2. Where we have recognition, ensure UNISON negotiates with Community employers to ensure conditions for overnight sleep-in shifts are clean and safe. 3. Continue to campaign for a care sector which is adequately funded, helping to ensure care staff no longer have to experience the kind of shocking conditions outlined in the “Sleeping-in, losing out” report. 	<p>Work to achieve a better system of social care is now being led through the cross-service group Social Care Project, with notable commitment to better future systems achieved in both Scotland and Wales, but of course much depends on the implementation of these. In England, welcome extra money (but not enough) has been forthcoming, but no change that will decisively improve the system.</p>
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M 8

Making It Fair Social Care

1. Continue to campaign vigorously for adequate investment, training, remuneration and value for our members in social care, working with other affected UNISON Service Groups and forums, such as local government, health and private contractors.
2. Specifically campaign for a social care system where care workers:
 - A. No longer have to endure poverty pay
 - B. Have adequate time to provide care, rather than rushing between unrealistically short appointment times
 - C. Are paid at least National Minimum Wage for Overnight Sleep in Shifts
 - D. Are paid for travel time between appointments
 - E. Are properly protected from violent attacks in the course of their work
3. Work with regions and branches and Community employers to identify good practice in social care training provision and to highlight the disparity in provision across the sector.
4. Work with the NEC, Service Groups, Labour Link and other stakeholders including lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Cymru/Wales and Northern Ireland to continue to highlight the gross under-funding of adult social care and the impact this has on society.

Work to improve social care is now being led by the Social Care Project, with SGE involvement in the steering group; these principles informed the Social Care Strategy, published in 2020.

<p>M 9 Right to Buy and Shared Ownership in Housing Associations in England</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with the National Executive Council, Service Groups, Labour Link and other stakeholders including lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Cymru/Wales and Northern Ireland to campaign to ensure the proposed policy on right to buy and shared ownership in housing associations is not implemented 2. Work with colleagues on the Housing Associations Sector Committee to produce a briefing on the negative impact that right to buy can have, for use as a campaigning tool by members 	<p>We have continued to point up the negative consequences of right to buy, including in the Housing Manifesto in 2020. The briefing was produced by SGE member Lynn Gillespie and used in lobbying on this issue.</p>
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<p>M 10 Supporting People</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with UNISON’s Labour Link and other stakeholders seek engagement with the Department of Communities and NI Housing Executive in relation to the Supporting People Programme. 2. Work with UNISON’s Labour Link to campaign for and lobby the Department for Communities, the NI Housing Executive and all other Government Departments and public bodies with responsibilities in this area to: Immediately reverse the cuts that have taken place. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Immediately review all funding arrangements that community and voluntary sector employers have to provide services under the Programme and make sure that workers are not exploited. This should be fully transparent and must involve UNISON. b. Commission an independent, expert-led review into the Supporting People Programme, with full UNISON Community branch involvement and engagement, to make recommendations on the level of funding that is required to meet need and ensure our members are properly paid for the vital work that they do. 	<p>This was taken forward in a different way, as UNISON NI colleagues successfully engaged with the relevant Ministers following the resumption of devolved Government in Northern Ireland in 2020.</p> <p>UNISON C&V Branch NI have developed their own campaign targeting the devolved NI Executive and relevant Department with responsibility for SP funding.</p>
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<p>M 11 National Standards for Social Care – Protecting Disabled Workers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Campaign for a social care system that values social care workers and social care recipients, where there are agreed national standards on pay, terms and conditions and ethical commissioning 2. Campaign for a personal budgets system that incorporates payment of national terms and conditions for Personal Assistants 3. Work with the Labour Link to lobby the Labour Party to include working age disabled people in their vision for free personal care. 	<p>This work is now being led by the social care projects, with these principles an important component of the social care strategy.</p>
<p>M 12 Branch Structures</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consult with every UNISON region and devolved nation to encourage active consideration the structures used to organise community members, particularly Community Branches 2. Consult with every UNISON region and devolved nation to ensure UNISON regions and branches are aware of the frustrations of some Community members in being unable to access UNISON services as quickly and easily as they should be able to. 	<p>Branch structures are the responsibility of regions. Through cross-regional working, regions have been able to understand the strengths of different organisational models. It is for regional Councils to decide what is appropriate in their own circumstances.</p>

<p>M 13 Inclusive Workplace Policies for Non-Binary Members in the Community Sector</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gather and promote good practice from branches in the community sector of non-binary inclusive policies and practices; 2. continue to promote the Gender equality: non-binary inclusion fact sheet to community branches; 3. work with the National Executive Council to provide guidance to branches on making branch records, communications and meetings inclusive and accessible for everyone including our non-binary members. 	<p>Information on good practices was gathered through a branch survey in late 2021, with the results disseminated through an e-bulletin in November 2021. We have promoted the inclusion fact sheet to branches.</p>
<p>M 14 Recruiting and Organising Black Members in the Fragmented Workforce</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider ways to support Black members who wish to become workplace representatives but are unable to access paid time from their employer. 2. Explore effective and clear pathways which will assist Black members developing as activists, with specific training targeted towards them in the fragmented workforce. 3. Develop information and resources targeted at Black members and workers in the community sector to assist with this recruitment drive. 	<p>We carried out detailed analysis of rep density within our 40 largest employers and found that Black members were as likely to be reps as their non-Black counterparts. We will continue to work with the NBMC, developing and circulating relevant materials to Community members.</p>

EM 1 Promoting the EU Settlement Scheme to Community Members

1. Continue to work with the NEC and UNISON's Service Groups to highlight the valued contribution EU workers play within our sector and their particular importance in the social care workforce.
2. Continue to publicise the UNISON/JCWI EU Settlement Scheme advice service to Community Service Group members through our e-bulletins and other appropriate media and to make resources available to branches to ensure that those UNISON members who fall within the scope of the scheme are made aware of the need to apply for settled status.

We promoted the EU settlement scheme to members, and the help available to members via JCWI, through newsletter, social media etc, until the scheme for most applicants closed in 2021.

<p>EM 2 Stop 'First Homes' Proposals</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Add our voice to the wide range of those opposing these plans as they currently stand and submit a consultation response before it closes on 3 April 2020. This response should highlight the threat posed to expansion of affordable housing provision by these proposals. 2. Work with Labour Link to raise this issue with MP's and Councillors. 3. Continue our commitment to support real radical changes within this sector which would see funding for the construction of a new generation of social housing fit to meet the needs of the country; and promote UNISON's Housing Manifesto: "Safe, decent and affordable homes for all". 	<p>A consultation response setting out opposition to the plans was submitted in 2020. We have continued to promote the Housing Manifesto and to make the case for a better system of social housing development.</p>
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