

**Stronger in UNISON**

**UNISON**  
**Annual Report 2021 – 2022**





## General Secretary's Foreword

### Christina McAnea

Rising to every challenge is UNISON's strength. This report demonstrates how elected officials, lay activists and staff have worked together in partnership, across every region and nation, and with our national office, to meet the biggest global challenge in a generation. Support and advice for every UNISON member was our mission. We delivered that by drawing on everyone's experience and knowledge, adapting quickly, and flexing every bit of political muscle and influence.

Electing a new General Secretary during a pandemic was not expected, but I'm so incredibly honoured to be the first woman to hold this post, especially as we are the UK's biggest women's organisation with over 1 million women members. Big change. Another glass ceiling smashed by UNISON. Our union is used to smashing stereotypes, because we are dynamic, ever changing to meet the challenges of a modern world, but with an unwavering focus on improving the lives of public service workers and defending the precious public services they deliver.

Speaking up for our members on pay, terms and conditions, pensions, and supporting them with legal advice and representation when they need it, is our priority. On sick pay – a huge issue during the pandemic – we put pressure on the government, resulting in the Infection Control Fund for workers in adult social care. Not a comprehensive solution, but it helped some of the lowest paid. We've lobbied governments, campaigned persistently, and taken strike action in our fight for decent pay rises. There can be no going back to normal, and we must stay determined and united in this goal.

Problems with PPE made constant headlines, because we gathered information from our PPE hotline, highlighting the frightening risks our members faced. We tirelessly pursued issues with employers, councils, and government ministers, to protect our members, and the people they care for.

Every devolved government, almost every national government department and hundreds of employers, across every service group, relied on our trusted, experienced, and powerful voice built on nearly 30 years of collective hard work. We secured seats at the tables that mattered, demanding, and influencing to get the right Covid-19 guidance out to workers who were delivering our country's Covid-19 response.

Challenging governments, we've forced U-turns on mandatory vaccinations, on the Immigration Health Surcharge for health and social care workers, and my work on the Future Social Care Coalition means we are a leading voice in demanding a National Care Service. Our political efforts continue to resist the government's attacks on the rights to protest, the Human Rights Act and we are challenging them on their policy failures.

There For You, our UNISON welfare charity, stepped in to help members with income shortfalls, helping migrant workers feed their families while working on the pandemic frontline and in some cases, helping members with funeral, and cremation costs.

We continue to support our retired members, working on health and care provision for older people, living standards, defending universal benefits, concessionary bus passes, and with accessing GP services during Covid-19.

Our union works tirelessly for members, and this report is a testament to the efforts of thousands of people. And as our branches are the lifeblood of our union, we are making huge strides in getting the right support and resources to them. This report spells out the important package of measures for branches as part of our Branch Resources Review – more funding, better software, online services, and a new facility time strategy, are all part of this.

Members are proud of our union, that's why we are the biggest union in the UK. Membership grew during the pandemic, and we mobilised more members to tackle workplace issues and become health and safety reps. We continued to stay relevant by deploying new and innovative techniques, but we're not complacent about the challenges ahead. The Membership Engagement Project, Organising & Recruitment Strategy Development Project, and UNISON College aim to drive up participation, equip our activists and members with the skills they need, and secure our union's future.

Equalities remains a huge crossover with our health and safety work, and equality bargaining on gender and ethnicity pay gaps sits alongside our campaigning work. Our Self Organised Groups are important to us, because we know about inequalities in the workplace - the pandemic only set them ablaze for everybody else to see. Black, women, disabled and young workers were disproportionately affected, and LGBT+ workers faced increasing harassment. UNISON pushed for individual risk assessments, published advice on rights at work and forced the government to expand the Access to Work scheme so disabled workers could work from home with the adjustments they needed. And I'm so proud that we've dedicated 2022 as the Year of Disabled Workers.

Never underestimate the impact of UNISON's collective strength, here in the UK, and globally. At home, UNISON led the call for a Covid-19 public inquiry, and we're preparing vital evidence to give our members a voice in the process. We're also campaigning hard on the cost of living and the cost of working, and we published our ground-breaking report on greening public services at COP26. And internationally, we were the first union to call on the government to waive intellectual property rights for Covid-19 vaccines, to overcome the stark inequality in vaccination rates between the global North and South. We help defend rights to trade union activities in Colombia and Turkey, we've given branches resources to call for the LGPS to engage with and divest from companies involved in illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank and we've challenged powerful multi-national corporations on slave labour in the production of PPE in Sri Lanka. And most recently, we were the first UK trade union to condemn Putin's aggression in Ukraine, supporting our sister trade unions in Ukraine and the ITUC appeal. But the strength to do all of this relies on you, and every UNISON member, working together for a better world.

In solidarity,



**Christina McAnea**  
**UNISON General Secretary**

## Foreword – President

### A world to win

Well, there's an old saying that sometimes weeks last years and sometimes years last weeks. The last two years have certainly been examples of the latter.

Chickens are certainly 'coming home to roost.' As inflation soars, wages, pensions and benefits fall in value and the full cost of COVID expenditure follies become apparent – our members are fully aware that they are being 'taken for a ride.'

The USA miners' leader in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Big Bill Haywood, used to say that: "If one man has a dollar he didn't work for, some other man worked for a dollar he didn't get." The covid crisis has only emphasised the truth of that statement as the wealth gap widens. Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson's rockets into space should have said on the side 'sponsored by workers' pay, conditions and pensions.'

As millions of British workers put their lives on the line to provide services, transport, food and clothing during COVID – the government was prepared to clap, but not pay.

Exhausted, frightened and committed workers saw promises of 'levelling-up' for what they were – empty words. At bus stops, in pubs, in workplaces, in shops, at sporting events etc. workers increasingly expressed their disgust about inequalities. This talk will turn into action – workers increasingly cannot afford to live.

The action by the employers at P&O was a big mistake on their part. If the current system is to last, employers at least have to pretend to believe in the rule of law – otherwise we all might start choosing which laws we wish to obey.

As the president of this union, I have been determined to lift the profile of our union. Not only are we the biggest union in the UK but we should also act like it. We are not a building society or a bank – we should be lively, vibrant, campaigning and winners. I hope this annual report shows how UNISON are trying to achieve these aims.

This year, our union has begun to change. We have doubled the strike pay rate. We want our members and our activists to know that we 'have their back!'

As president of this union, I hope I have played some small part in accelerating the process of change.

My thanks to the vice-presidents, Kath Owen and Andrea Egan, for the great part they have played in the team. Thanks also to all staff without whom this union wouldn't function. A special thank you to all those in the union who make it work.

Leaders need to be 'dealers in hope.' It is not enough to say the Tories don't care, our members know that. We need to pose an alternative and be proud of it. We should pursue an alternative of housebuilding, security, decent pay, insourcing, good pensions, diversity and equality.



I hope that this annual report shows you the real signs of what UNISON is striving for. 'The cause of labour is the hope of the world'

**Paul Holmes**  
**UNISON President**

# Contents

## Chapter one

### Rising to the challenge: responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic since March 2020

Regional Lay Member contact	6
PPE	9
On-line engagement	11
Service Group and Sector Covid19 response	13
COVID Vaccination (Health)	15
PPE	15
Welfare charity support	16
Membership growth	16
Preparing for the Public Inquiry	17

## Chapter two

### Speaking up for our members

Social care	18
Public service Pay. Living wage and living standards	18
No Going Back to Normal campaign	19
Local Elections 2022 (and Northern Ireland Assembly)	20
2022 – the Year of the Disabled Worker	20
Getting to Net Zero and Greening Public Services	21
Exiting the EU & Post Brexit Campaigns	21
International	22
Windrush, Migrant workers and the hostile environment	23
Public Procurement	26
Housing	26
Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital technology in the workplace	27
Equalities	27
Pensions	33
Cymru / Wales	34
Northern Ireland	36
Scotland	37
Campaign Fund and Labour Link	38
Key campaigns in health care	39
Local Government campaigning	41
Education	42
Energy campaigning	44
Water, Environment and Transport	45
Private Contractors	46

## Chapter three

### Supporting our branches

Motion 72 implementation	47
Organising and Recruitment	51

## 6 Chapter four

### Supporting our members

Using the Law to fight for our members	54
Legal Advice and Representation	59
UNISON Living	61
	63

## Appendix 1

### Membership statistics

## Appendix 2

### Monitoring information

## 18 Appendix 3

### NEC meetings held since conference 2021

## 19 Appendix 4

### Conference delegate numbers

## Chapter one

### Rising to the challenge: responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic since March 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic and the introduction of a lockdown in March 2020 was a huge challenge to UNISON and to public services. The aim throughout the pandemic was to provide as much support and advice to members as possible and ensure the union had systems in place at local, regional and national levels to achieve this.

Following government advice issued on 16 March 2020, the process of closing the UNISON centre and the regional buildings began with all lay and staff meetings across the union being paused or cancelled.

It was also necessary to close the UNISONdirect call centre and rapidly move services online. This required ensuring that all references to the UNISONdirect phone line were amended to the email enquiry point and web chat function as soon as possible. The team worked with the UNISON digital team to co-ordinate this alongside the massively increased traffic coming through UNISON's social channels for support.

The national website quickly became a hugely important conduit of information, with members able to access the most up to date information about safety at work, PPE and the furlough scheme. The site also provided important signposts to getting help through There for You and enabled members to reach local support through the branch locator.

Working in unprecedented circumstances and in conjunction with the general secretary, the presidential team and other senior activists and staff it was decided that the priority was to centrally coordinate as much of the union's work as possible. This would avoid duplication of effort and provide clarity for members, activists and staff alike.

Given the different nature of the UNISON regions, and in some cases devolved government, it was recognised the regions would be crucial to feeding both into the centre and delivering for members on the ground.

---

## Regional Lay Member contact

New communication approaches to maintain regular contact with regional convenor teams in each region were put in place immediately.

Regional management teams liaised closely with regional convenors and other senior lay officers to discuss emerging issues.

Regular contact was maintained with branch secretaries in each region.

---

## Regional Communications

Regional websites were updated to reflect national advice on COVID-19 and regions also used social media to promote the union's advice and stories promoting the work of our members and the issues they face. UNISON digital provided guidance very early on regarding how to communicate around the sensitive issue of COVID-19 on digital channels which the team ensured had a wide circulation to ensure regions were communicating appropriately and consistently.

Supplementing the national media activity, regions arranged considerable coverage in local newspapers and regional television and radio.

---

## Branches

A top priority for each region was to put in place an early and ongoing assessment of the situation in each branch monitored by regional organisers and provide support as required.

The majority of branch offices were closed, with some exceptions where the employer was still operational. Despite this, and due to the dedication of all concerned, branches largely remained open with branch officers working from home with the support of regional staff.

Work was carried out in each region to update branch rep contact details for each branch and with UNISONdirect so that the most up to date contact details were available.

Many branches updated their own websites with relevant COVID-19 information.

---

## Case Forms

The need to adapt how case work, especially the handling of case forms, could be handled securely and efficiently during the lockdown was identified as a priority. Case forms, by their nature, contain large quantities of personal and sensitive data which needs to be handled with appropriate care to meet data protection obligations and ensure we do not put the union or our members at risk. Following the advice of the legal and IT departments a solution was developed and all regions and branches are using the new forms which have been well received.

this allowed new variants to sweep through workplaces and meant those countries who had loosened policy had to re-introduce measures – notably around the winter 2021 Omicron outbreak.

Across the UK, UNISON has had continuous engagement with government and direct impact in improving workplace safety and terms and conditions.

---

## Organising

Regions utilised organising staff, with support from administrative staff, to make a number of outbound calls to check in with members on the ground to see how they were and pick up issues arising from the pandemic. Different groups were prioritised in different regions and included student nurses, social care workers and private sector cleaners. The surge of new joiners also received welcome calls.

---

## Cymru/Wales

With their heightened social partnership structures, UNISON was able to engage closely with government throughout the pandemic

The tripartite Shadow Social Partnership Forum met fortnightly during the first part of the pandemic with the first minister to oversee all Wales policy on COVID. This led to several agreements including the Welsh Government providing PPE for health and social care workers.

The Welsh Partnership Council brought together a wider group of organisations and stakeholders and is chaired by a senior minister. This looked at policies applicable to all public sector employers including on digitalisation and agile working.

---

## Bereavement Forms

Information about members who died of COVID-19, including what support was required and being offered to grieving families was reported to UNISON centre. Each affected family received a personalised message from the general secretary.

Specific sectors also had partnership forums for instance regular meetings were held with the Welsh Local Government Association, the NHS Welsh Business Committee and the Schools Forum which oversaw the policy on school hubs and the introduction of professionalisation of teaching assistants.

In addition, the president and general secretary in 2020 temporarily raised the UNISON death benefit to the top of the scale (£576) and enabled regional staff to authorise speedy payments to the next kin without a death certificate being provided and a branch officer signing the forms.

The government also gave additional money for pay - guaranteeing the foundation living wage in social care and giving specific COVID payments for social care and health staff. Social care staff received payments for isolation to ensure that workers only visited one employer and didn't work for multiple employers, reducing the chance of infection spreading. Health staff got additional top up payments and extra leave on top of the pay review body settlements in Wales.

---

## Lobbying Governments (Westminster and devolved) and employers

Government COVID policies in the four home countries did not vary hugely in content at the start of the pandemic. However, moves from lockdown happened at a different pace, with England regularly loosening safety measures first, despite UNISON and other unions expressing concerns and challenging loose or late policy changes. Inevitably

---

## England

UNISON had a seat on the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) working group which

produced overarching government COVID-19 guidance across the whole of the workforce. This included the initial guidance on return to the workplace in the summer of 2021, which was used as a basis for more sector specific guidance.

UNISON health group co-chairs the NHS Social Partnership Forum (SPF), the tripartite national body which covers workforce policy issues. Through the pandemic, meetings were held more frequently as were sub-groups on recovery and backlog. The SPF held a national online conference and held special SPF briefings on issues including infection control and Omicron. Additional meetings were also held with health ministers.

UNISON was also represented on the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) working group on workforce issues, where we pressed the government to improve problems faced by members on community visits and care homes, notably around inadequate PPE and testing issues.

UNISON was represented on three Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sports' COVID-19 stakeholder groups: leisure, youth, and libraries, which produced specific guidance.

UNISON met with Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) officials to push issues of concern for members in refuse, recycling and waste to do with PPE and social distancing.

Following the disastrous COVID education policies and U-turns of 2020, UNISON was included in a new Department for Education (DfE) Ministerial Stakeholder group and a Permanent Secretaries Stakeholder group.

---

## Scotland

UNISON Scotland was directly involved in discussions and represented on several bodies throughout the pandemic.

Regular meetings were held with ministers and, via the Scottish TUC, UNISON's Scottish secretary and convener were part of the regular liaison meetings with the first minister.

UNISON with other education unions was part of ministerially chaired working groups for early years, schools further & higher education. We were also part, along with the employers' organisation COSLA, of a number of joint bodies and working groups convened by Scottish Government.

Partnership working in the NHS means that we are represented at all levels of decision making in health boards on COVID-19. In addition to this the employee director in all of Scotland's biggest health boards is a UNISON rep. This gave UNISON a strong voice.

UNISON action ensured that the Scottish Social Care Support Fund – which guaranteed sick pay equivalent payments to self-isolating social care staff was included as part of the emergency COVID legislation.

---

## Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, UNISON has sought to work with all executive ministers and their departments to deal with the impact of the pandemic in an effort to protect our members, their families and their communities. However, unlike devolved governments in Scotland and Wales, no formal social partnership structures exist between government and trade unions in Northern Ireland. Together with the NIC-ICTU, and further to the 'No Going Back to Normal' campaign, UNISON has demanded that partnership working with the trade union movement must be a core part of the business of the NI Executive as we seek to rebuild from the impact of the pandemic. The willingness to do business with all ministers and government departments must be reciprocated and the demand for real social dialogue will form a core part of our campaign in the 2022 NI assembly election.

In the absence of social partnership structures across Government, UNISON embarked on a programme of engagement with all executive ministers, often in conjunction with NIC-ICTU and our allies in the Equality Coalition, to press that major decisions relating to the pandemic had the protection of public health as the first priority and were made within a framework of equality and human rights. UNISON stressed the need for the entire executive to work together in dealing with the core issues affecting our members, and publicly challenged all political leaders when they have not worked together in the interests of all the people.

Through our bargaining structures in Northern Ireland, UNISON regularly met with senior officials in health and education to raise major issues during the pandemic regarding PPE, testing and contact tracing, sick pay, vaccinations and redeployment.



---

## PPE

It quickly became apparent, in 2020, that lack of adequate PPE was the biggest issue facing many members in the NHS and care homes, right across the UK.

Over two years on from the beginning of the pandemic it's difficult to convey just how frightening it was for health and care workers unable to get the appropriate PPE necessary to protect them as they cared for the sick and vulnerable. Surveys of UNISON members conducted during the first lock down showed that 46 per cent had raised concerns about PPE with their employers. 16 per cent said that their employer had not provided them with the right PPE to comply with guidance from Public Health England/ Scotland/Wales. 23 per cent weren't sure that the PPE met with the appropriate guidance.

It was hardly surprising that close to a quarter of care workers weren't sure about the appropriate guidance, as this did change. Looking back at UNISON's correspondence with government ministers from March 2020, it's clear that our members had very real concerns that changes to guidance were predicated on supply and distribution issues, rather than anything scientific. At that time, we were receiving a particularly high volume of calls from members in the ambulance, community and domiciliary care sectors – work settings in which it was very difficult to control risks.

Some of the comments from care workers that the union recorded at the time provide a vivid and horrific picture.

***“Nothing apart from gloves for the first month, and no hand sanitizer for six weeks, told to buy our own, and to get it for service users at the shops?”***

***“I work in social care and provide intimate care to elderly residents daily. We have access to aprons and gloves but no masks. We were given five paper masks and told we were not getting any more. I was told to reuse these and wear them for many days at a time. The company has watered down the hand wash to make it go further.”***

***“I work in a care home, and we had 12 cases of coronavirus patient and we are not provided with the right PPE and we have to go in there to care for them. Am so worried on what to do.”***

***“At the beginning we had no PPE, our concerns were not listened to, some staff were threatened with disciplinaries, not ‘til concerns hit the media were we listened to.”***

***“Given nothing apart from gloves for the first month then supplied with one use face masks, aprons, one set of eye protection, and three very basic visors. PPE in hospital and PPE in the nursing home are different, so you only need a surgical mask and not an ffp3 mask and apparently we don't need gowns or plastic aprons.”***

The union was united and tireless in pursuing these PPE issues with employers, councils and with government ministers.

---

## Sick Pay (lack of)

A further issue that UNISON raised repeatedly throughout the pandemic was the lack of decent sick pay provision. The union argued that this was both unjust, resulting in some of the worst-off workers going hungry when they were unwell, and bad for infection control, forcing people back to work when unwell out of economic necessity.

In response to pressure the government at Westminster did introduce the infection control fund for those working in adult social care. Although inadequate in many instances and no substitute for a comprehensive system of sick pay provision, it did result in some of the lowest paid receiving help.

UNISON continues to campaign hard for policies that will deliver decent sick pay for all who are unwell and who should not be in the workplace.

---

## Working with the TUC on furlough

The furlough scheme, introduced at the start of lockdown in March 2020, was the largest labour market intervention in generations. The government have been quick to take the credit but, in all likelihood, they would not have introduced such a scheme voluntarily. UNISON worked with other unions and the TUC to ensure the government scheme was both sufficiently comprehensive and generous enough to protect jobs and incomes at a time of unprecedented disruption to economic activity.

## Inequalities

Boris Johnson famously commented early in the pandemic that we were all in it together. While it is true that anyone can be infected by coronavirus, UNISON members know that its impact is anything but even-handed. Indeed, the pandemic has deepened existing inequalities and brought its own disadvantage and discrimination.

Front-line workers have had greater exposure to the virus. Workers on insecure contracts are least able to defend their right to safety at work. Workers who have faced decades of institutional discrimination are less likely to complain and less likely to be taken seriously when they do complain. This comes on top of the clear correlation between deprivation, health and infection rates.

This has represented a devastating mix for many UNISON members. Occupational segregation means women, Black and migrant workers are over-represented on the front-line. They are particularly concentrated in the most vulnerable and fragmented workforces, including social care. Young workers are more likely to be in insecure work and face an uncertain future. Workplace challenges that face LGBT+ workers are heightened. Retired members have seen any security they had hoped for put at risk.

UNISON has gathered evidence of members' experiences and used this to bargain, lobby and campaign for change. We have also supported members, with dedicated COVID-19 advice for Black members, disabled members, pregnant members and new parents.

Women represent the majority of health, social care and education workers and were exposed to a higher risk of infection. Low paid women have been particularly affected as only one in ten low paid jobs can be done from home.

At home, women took on three times more caring responsibilities than men. One in six women – mainly those on the lowest pay – had to reduce their hours at work as a direct result of school and childcare closures. Some have been forced out of work altogether.

In February 2021, 47,000 women responded in just two days to UNISON's survey on the physical, emotional and financial impact of COVID-19. It confirmed that women who can least afford it were paying the biggest price. Nearly 25,000 of those who participated in the survey (almost half) earned £18,000 a year or less, and a third had an annual salary

of £15,000 or less. About 45% had seen their household expenditure increase. These survey results have been invaluable in helping shape our bargaining and campaigning priorities, putting women's voices at the heart of recovery.

During the pandemic, the treatment of pregnant women by their employers was scandalous. Government advice was late and inconsistent. We campaigned and lobbied successfully to get the Health and Safety Executive to change their advice about risk assessments for pregnant workers. We ensured there was up to date advice for pregnant women and their reps on the UNISON COVID webpages.

UNISON sponsored research by Maternity Action into discrimination against pregnant women which published just before Christmas 2021. We are using this to raise public awareness of the issues faced by pregnant workers and new mothers and as evidence in our joint campaign with Maternity Action for changes to the law and maternity benefits.

Early in the pandemic, it became increasingly clear that Black people and communities were paying a particularly high price. One cause of this was the occupational segregation that has arisen from decades of systemic racism. Black workers are concentrated in lower paid, frontline roles, with many on insecure contracts. Over-representation in front line roles meant greater exposure to infection.

In addition to occupational segregation, Black workers face racism at work, exacerbating risk. This can be a barrier to raising concerns and accessing safe working conditions, including homeworking, redeployment, appropriate PPE, and social distancing.

UNISON surveyed Black members in June 2020 and December 2020 on their experience of work and Covid-19. This was at a point when it was clear that Black workers faced disproportionate risk of serious illness and death from Covid. Yet responses from our members showed that few employers were implementing individual risk assessments.

Many UNISON Black members had serious concerns about whether their employer was following government safety guidelines. Yet a worrying 34% did not know or were not sure how to raise concerns about the risk faced by themselves, their colleagues or service users. Furthermore, 22% said they would be uncomfortable or very uncomfortable raising safety issues at work. A significant number of workers were having to attend work even when they knew they had been exposed to – or even had - the

virus, or risk losing pay or indeed their jobs. The situation for overseas workers was further worsened by having to deal with the Home Office and the hostile environment.

UNISON pushed for individual risk assessments for all Black workers, providing a 'how to' toolkit, and published advice for Black member themselves on their rights at work during COVID. We called for employers and government to act to address long-standing and deep-seated racism.

Growing awareness of the impact of COVID on Black communities coincided with a resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, in the wake of the murder of George Floyd by police in the USA. UNISON issued a public statement, calling on the UK government to take action on the “systemic structural racism” that has been exposed by the pandemic.

The statement further called on the government to:

- implement the recommendations from the Windrush Lessons Learned review by Wendy Williams from March 2021;
- implement the Lammy Review of the criminal justice system from 2017;
- bring into force in England section 1 of the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Socio-Economic duty, which is already enacted in Scotland and Wales;
- act on Theresa May’s comprehensive Race Disparity Audit, which was published in 2017.

UNISON has also highlighted the devastating impact on disabled members and campaigned successfully for change. At the height of the pandemic, over 5,000 disabled members responded to our survey, telling us about their experience both of working from home and of continuing to go to the workplace. We used their stories to successfully lobby the government to expand the Access to Work scheme so that it covered working from home, a massive improvement for our members stuck at home without the adjustments they needed to do their jobs.

In another win for UNISON, we also persuaded the government to re-write guidance for extremely clinically vulnerable people who were asked to shield, to acknowledge that many of these workers had a job. The updated guidance highlighted working from home and gave us a much stronger negotiating hand with employers who were forcing some of our disabled members to come into the workplace despite the risks.

We continually updated advice for our disabled members based on constantly changing government guidance and we produced bargaining guides for workplace reps to help then fight our members’ corner. We developed guidance for shielding workers, a guide to supporting members with long-COVID, and a ‘Know your Rights’ leaflet for disabled workers, focusing on the need for individual risk assessments.

---

## On-line engagement

UNISON activists quickly adapted to moving scheduled conferences and seminars on-line, utilising Zoom and Teams to complete business and maintain political and activist dialogue. This culminated in all major conferences being held on-line in 2021. This activity was augmented by a series of successful ad-hoc, all member webinars. These included a number of webinars organised by the international team, some focussed on the union’s work on climate change in the run up to Cop 26 and an end of year rally organised by the NEC entitled Fight for Fairness, at which the vice president, the general secretary, the chair of policy and chair of national black members spoke about the challenges ahead for the union and our members.

---

## Migrant workers

The ending of EU freedom of movement, the introduction of a new immigration system, the inclusion of millions of EU citizens under the hostile environment means combined with the pandemic resulted in unprecedented difficulties on migrant workers working in public services, and, by extension, heaped further pressure on the services themselves. This has led to increased demands on UNISON branches and reps, both from migrant worker members encountering problems in the workplace, but also issues relating to how public service workers are being asked to implement the hostile environment.

The pandemic and the impact of lockdown on migrant worker members meant that UNISON centre had to completely change the way it worked to support affected members. The policy unit became a first-point-of-call resource for regions, branches and members facing unprecedented crises. A combination of the hostile environment, the paralysis of the normal functioning of Home Office visa services and the impact of ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’ meant that UNISON focused support for

migrant worker members as we have never done before.

To facilitate this, closer working with regions and branches was developed. UNISON also played a key role in working with NHS employers, the DHSC and the Home Office to resolve critical problems for branches and members faced with unexpected problems relating to migrant worker members on the COVID-19 frontline.

Activities included:

- playing a key role in forcing the Government into a u-turn on the immigration health surcharge for health and social care workers.
- promoting the new reimbursement scheme and ensuring that some of the lowest paid workers in health and social care were able to get back thousands of pounds each for their families
- securing a key concession to the new Immigration Act ensuring that the Government would have to conduct an independent audit of the impact of the Act on the social care sector.
- running briefing sessions and webinars on issues for migrant workers at national, regional and branch level to support the work of regions and service groups.
- providing advice and support for branches across the UK to help individual members facing the loss of their job and even the threat of deportation.
- providing advice, support and briefings for regions and branches about the EU Settled Status Scheme for eligible members.
- publicising UNISON's free specialist immigration advice phoneline run by JCWI to regions, branches and members.

---

## Health and safety

UNISON's health and safety work on COVID-19 has been a combined effort, from the work of the national health and safety unit alongside the national health and safety committee; the bargaining support unit and the work of the service groups. There has also been crossover with equalities work, when looking at protecting those members who faced a disproportionate impact from exposure to COVID at work.

At a national health and safety level, the unit has supported the 'coronavirus – your rights at work' page making sure that unison members had timely advice on COVID health and safety issues. The 'How to Work Safely' guidance was developed for members outlining what to expect

from their employers and how to escalate concerns. To support UNISON's health and safety representatives, comprehensive risk assessment guidance on covid and routes of escalation was developed and rolled out in a series of webinars to representatives. In 2021 as more evidence emerged on the airborne nature of the virus, ventilation guidance was developed.

Working with equalities, the health and safety unit supported the development of specific advice for Black, disabled, and pregnant members and their representatives and branches, including pushing for employers to carry out individual risk assessments and put in extra protections for workers who may be more at risk.

With the increased interest in health and safety amongst the membership, a targeted 'Be on the Safe Side' campaign to recruit health and safety representatives was launched and resulted in a 3% increase in the number of women health and safety reps. Women now account for 46% of all UNISON health and safety reps.

We also launched the branch health and safety review tool to support organising on health and safety. The online tool gives activists the ability to scrutinise their employer's risk assessments and identify safety concerns that are not been acted on.

The health and safety unit supported branches, reps and members to escalate issues to their employer and or the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), including supporting reps at the Environment Agency to issue a union improvement notice to get the employer to review their covid risk assessment.

We escalated a number of serious national concerns to government departments, including writing to the defence minister about the safety of our members working for Compass in an army college where there had been outbreaks of COVID. We have also written to the HSE on numerous occasions in relation to failures at national and employer level, to identify and assess the increased risks to certain groups of workers including Black, disabled, and pregnant workers. With the emergence of the Omicron strain we wrote to them following up on the findings of our health and safety representatives' survey which highlighted a lack of consultation and risk assessment review. More recently, we wrote to them highlighting our concerns about the removal of the requirement to carry out a covid risk assessment from 1 April 2022.

We have worked closely with the TUC on several issues including the lack of formal (RIDDOR) reporting of cases of COVID, pushing employers to consult health and safety reps on covid risk assessments and the importance of ventilation.

We have worked closely with the TUC representatives on the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, on the council's work to review prescription of COVID as an occupational disease.

In relation to the relaxation of public health measures in England, we have continuously challenged the Government on weakening the mask mandate and more recently the end to requirements to isolate, the availability of free testing and the removal of employers' duty to carry out a risk assessment on the risk of covid infection.

---

## Service Group and Sector Covid19 response

---

### Police and Justice

UNISON met regularly with National Police Chiefs Council and the National Police Coordination Centre to represent the interests of police staff over the police service response to covid. In the Probation Service UNISON worked closely with our sister trade unions to ensure that risk assessments were properly undertaken and that the exceptional delivery models were fit for purpose

### Higher Education

In HE we set up round table meetings with the national employer's body, UCEA, to discuss how the sector managers COVID in relation to workforce issues.

Over the course of the pandemic, we agreed a series of three national agreements:

- 1 Principles for working safely on campus during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic <https://www.ucea.ac.uk/library/publications/principles-for-working-safely-on-campus-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/principles-for-working-safely-on-campus-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-updated-oct-2021.pdf>
- 2 This was followed by a Joint statement on testing <https://www.unison.org.uk/joint-statement-between-ucea-and-the-he-trade-unions-on-covid-19-testing-for-staff/>
- 3 And a Joint statement on vaccinations [https://www.](https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2021/03/Joint-statement-between-UCEA-and-the-HE-trade-unions-on-staff-vaccinations.pdf)

[unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2021/03/Joint-statement-between-UCEA-and-the-HE-trade-unions-on-staff-vaccinations.pdf](https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2021/03/Joint-statement-between-UCEA-and-the-HE-trade-unions-on-staff-vaccinations.pdf)

The sector health and safety body, HESH (Higher Education Safety and Health), moved to holding monthly meetings to discuss COVID management. This body is attended by representatives from the joint HE trade unions including UNISON, the employers, UCEA, the Universities Safety and Health Association (USHA) and the HSE. In these meetings all bodies agreed a new national template for raising health and safety concerns.

---

### Local Government NJC

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NJC Trade Unions and Employers' Side have been in constant negotiations. These have led to a series of national level agreements to protect our members, whether they have faced heightened safety risks, been redeployed to help against the pandemic, suffered ill health, are shielding, or are caring for others. UNISON negotiated helpful joint guidance for employers on areas like arrangements for those who are shielding, safeguards for people who are redeployed, risk assessments, and leave arrangements. For the most part, these national agreements have been well received locally and they have been followed. As restrictions began to be lifted, we continued to negotiate joint circulars, and ensured that employers continued to get a strong steer on face coverings, shielding and risk assessments.

Where we could not reach agreement with the national employers, chiefly on our campaign for individual risk assessments to be mandatory for many workers, we issued our own strong guidance to branches to aid them with local negotiations.

---

### Libraries

UNISON became a founder member of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) stakeholder group. Through this we developed strong relationships with Libraries Connected, who led on drafting government guidance on libraries relating to covid and secured a series of improvements to each successive piece of guidance, including a much stronger line on face coverings, social distancing, dealing with challenging situations, and hygiene.

---

## Care Quality Commission

UNISON sought to mitigate the impact of the introduction of the law that required mandatory COVID vaccinations for anyone required to work in a care home in England. This law covered not just care home workers but also CQC staff who entered care homes to carry out their inspections. We also provided support to the very small number of members who lost their jobs as a consequence of the soon to be revoked law and will be actively pursuing their reinstatement where possible.

---

## Schools

UNISON's priority throughout the pandemic has been to protect staff, pupils, education and our communities

In England, the government's failure to put in place sufficient mitigations contributed towards high rates of transmission in schools throughout and severe disruption to face to face education

In January 2021, during the second wave, following the government's complete failure to reduce transmission in the preceding months, we issued section 44/100 advice to our members in England when the government announced it intended to fully reopen schools without sufficient mitigations to protect pupils, staff and our communities. This was at the time of the Alpha variant, before the vaccine rollout, and when the rest of the country was going into lockdown. The government was forced to change its position and throughout the lockdown our members ensured face to face education for key worker and vulnerable children and provision of free school meals provision and online learning. Members worked in schools throughout the entire two years of the pandemic

With the arrival of the vaccine our message has been that we need to have proportionate mitigations in schools to support the vaccine roll out to bring an end to disruption and protect face to face education.

We continued to challenge the Westminster Government's failure to put in place sufficient measures both in meetings with government and in the media; including being part of a headline media story in 2021 that 10 Downing Street had 'tried to block' the release of data on the spread of the Delta variant in schools.

Throughout the two years we have worked with the other education unions to produce updated guidance for schools, colleges, and early years; calling for additional mitigations to be put in place locally including on long-COVID. With many education settings opting to follow our additional guidance to protect pupils and staff.

We also actively worked with scientists, medical professionals, and politicians to build the case for additional mitigations, including a high-profile social media campaign day in December 2021. Following our campaigning, the government temporarily reintroduced face coverings in schools for the start of the winter term.

We sent out regular communications and guidance to members and branches and in February and March this year focused on opposing the government's removal of free testing.

---

## Health

On 16 March 2020 the Secretary of State for Health made a statement to the House of Commons, declaring the Coronavirus pandemic to be a public health emergency. From that time, the health SGE undertook a comprehensive programme of work on COVID-19 issues. Some of this work was planned but made more critical by the conditions members faced in the pandemic. Some work was brand new, with new campaign and policy objectives developing as members and activists reported emerging issues.

We used our formal partnership structures to engage policymakers on the crucial issue of safety at work and to influence the scope and content of formal guidance on infection prevention and control.

In 2021, we continued to work on the maintenance and development of provisions, guidance and FAQs on terms and conditions issues relevant to COVID via formal structures across the different parts of the UK. We secured agreement to re-issue and update relevant COVID guidance as the pandemic progressed, including joint guidance on management of annual leave at the start of the Omicron surge.

As the country moved from the second wave of the pandemic in April 2021, the NHS began work to restart services that had been paused. This brought a new set of challenges for our members, and we used our

formal partnership structures to engage policymakers on the crucial issue of safety at work, including violence prevention, risk assessment, health and wellbeing support and infection prevention control.

In March 2021, we took part in a Social Partnership Forum (SPF) conference – ‘Positive Partnership working through Covid and beyond’ which was co-presented by UNISON’s head of health.

In July 2021, the SPF held a recovery workshop looking at the impact of restarting NHS services that had been parked due to the COVID pandemic.

In October 2021, the SPF held a workshop on the changes to the Infection Prevention Control guidance for the UK. This was with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), and we were able to feed in concerns about access to PPE.

In January 2022, the SPF held a workshop with the UKHSA about the impact of the Omicron variant where we were able to discuss the impact on staffing, pressures on those still working and other issues like testing kits for staff.

---

## COVID Vaccination (Health)

UNISON undertook a series of actions to influence the government not to introduce vaccination as a condition of deployment for NHS staff. We contributed to a wide range of national and regional print and broadcast media and raised our concerns with senior government ministers including directly with the Secretary of State for Health.

After several successful attempts to stave off the move to mandate the COVID vaccination, the Westminster Government consulted on plans to make the vaccine a condition of deployment in the NHS in England in late 2021.

We responded to the formal consultation outlining the risks of implementation of the policy and undertook numerous parliamentary briefings ahead of both the formal consultation and the regulatory process. We also raised the issue and impact through formal structures including the NHS Staff Council and NHS Social Partnership Forum.

Whilst advocating for the policy to be scrapped altogether, we called with NHS employers for the Government to delay or extend the grace period. We also issued numerous

pieces of guidance and updates through Health News and on our dedicated FAQs page on our website, including providing support ahead of the key date of 3 February, when unvaccinated staff were to be issued with dismissal letters.

On 31 January 2022, the government announced a U-turn on the vaccine policy, agreeing to consult on bringing forward regulations to revoke vaccination as a condition of deployment. The government received over 90,000 responses to its consultation with 90% of respondents supporting the withdrawal of the mandatory vaccine policy.

---

## PPE

---

### Social Care

UNISON has supported members through the continuing pandemic, mandatory vaccination in care homes and pushing for proper sick pay and investment in social care wages. Our union has been at the forefront of campaigning in this area, calling for a long-term plan and a publicly funded and publicly provided national care service at the forefront of the policy debate. Two years into the pandemic, UNISON is now widely recognised as the leading trade union in social care by workers, employers, commissioners and government.

---

### Health

Initially, this work focused on sharing official guidance, establishing meetings with public health officials to explore guidance, protocols and advice on risk management and provision of PPE. Also, to identify how trade unions, in general, and health and safety reps, in particular, should be involved in local application and adaptation. Gaps in the provision of information and advice were identified through these routes and UNISON advocated successfully for protocols specific to community and ambulance settings to be produced.

Between the start of the official Lockdown on 26 March 2020 and the Easter bank holiday weekend on 10-13 April, branches and regions raised concerns via the health group about major problems with supply of PPE across the NHS. Delays to international shipments of PPE added further pressure, leading some employers to seek approval from

branches to reduce the levels of PPE provided or otherwise vary protocols on use of specific materials (including requests to sign off re-use of disposable gowns etc).

The health group worked with regional health organisers to support branches facing these problems, providing advice, escalating issues within the union, and arranging intervention via NHS employers or policy officials where appropriate. While the NHS did come close to 'running out' of PPE, work done across health structures within UNISON in the run-up to the Easter weekend supported mutual aid efforts across the sector, where PPE supplies were shared across organisations to cover the most urgent gaps.

A UNISON branch guide to infection prevention and control and PPE was produced and issued, basing content on those questions most frequently raised.

UNISON led the development of a set of partnership principles on PPE. These were initially agreed with the other NHS trade unions and then formally adopted by the Social Partnership Forum (SPF) in England at the start of May 2020. Crucially, these principles set out clear standards of involvement that branches should expect from employers on PPE, including:

- Support for trade union statutory health and safety representatives to be consulted in good time in relation to PPE, including on policies and risks;
- Sharing of local risk management strategy/plans particularly relating to PPE with trade unions;
- Early notification to local trade unions of deviation from or change to established plans or formal guidance;
- Provision of local risk assessments where requested;
- The establishment of local mechanisms for trade unions to escalate to employers any PPE related concerns raised by their members.

Emphasising the importance of individual risk assessments was a key element of UNISON's work on PPE.

In the early stages of adapting to remote organising, the service group ran a trial webinar, attended by 85 organising staff from across the union, to provide a briefing and Q&A on COVID issues including IPC, and how to escalate PPE issues through UNISON structures.

By mid-May, the most acute PPE supply issues had receded in most health branches, although remained a regular

theme for advice and information from the service group. In England, a 'PPE Tzar' - Lord Paul Deighton - was appointed by the Government and attended SPF meetings to brief trade unions and employers on the initiative to mainstream PPE manufacture and supply within the UK.

Sadly, despite the efforts of the union at all levels to protect NHS staff, almost a thousand health workers died. The high number of health worker deaths led UNISON to call for an official minute's silence on International Workers' Memorial Day last May, gaining support from many other health unions and securing public and government backing.

---

## Schools

We wrote to 20 major contractors asking them to agree to pay full statutory sick pay to all staff and subsequently 'named and shamed' them on our website when it became clear they were (unless TUPE' protection applied) only paying SSP.

---

## Welfare charity support

Many regional staff and activists picked up calls from members in distress struggling with reduced incomes and these were passed to There for You. Assistance has been offered with issues around shortfalls in household income but also in some cases with funeral and cremation costs.

Advice was also issued to branches explaining how they could contribute to the welfare fund but also reminding them it was not permissible to make welfare payments at a local level.

The union has made a successful application to the COVID 19 Healthcare Support Appeal (CHSA) to assist the work of There for You, which will support members going forwards.

---

## Membership growth

The pandemic was challenging in terms of growth as people and the union tried to adapt to the new circumstances. The means of communication changed as people were away from workplaces and access was limited. Traditional means of organising and recruitment either could not be used or



were not as effective and workplace visibility in some areas suffered for a time.

That said, the union quickly and proactively adapted deploying new and innovative techniques and we continued to stay relevant to our members ensuring we met our commitment to be there for them. As a result, the union saw increased recruitment levels with over 179,776 joining in 2020 and thanks to the union’s new join online system people could continue to join with over 95% choosing to do so. The union saw a substantial suppression of members leaving due to the value of their membership resulting in overall growth in excess of 22,000 members.

Last year was more challenging with leavers rates returning to normal levels and recruitment remaining challenging as everyone tries to adapt to a “new normal”. This resulted in recruitment dropping to 142,373 in 2021 and an overall reduction of members by just over 29,000 (see appendix).

2023. UNISON is committed to ensuring our members have a voice in the process and that their experience is used to hold government to account for its failings.

---

## Preparing for the Public Inquiry

UNISON was consistent in its calls for a UK level judge-led public inquiry into the government’s handling of the pandemic with powers to call witnesses under oath – and has engaged with the nations on calls for complimentary inquiries that examine the response of the devolved administrations. The union has said that the inquiry should be set up as soon as possible, so that lessons could be learned that would help deal with subsequent variants and waves.

Working with the TUC, sister unions and the bereaved families, UNISON has also pushed to ensure that the inquiry addresses: the impact of ten years of austerity and fragmentation of outsourced public services on resilience; supply of PPE; the lack of sick pay; the disproportionate impact of COVID on Black communities and the least well off; and the government’s procurement process.

At the time of writing the government had appointed a chair for the inquiry who was consulting with UNISON, other trade unions and stakeholders on the terms of reference. A similar process was underway in Scotland. There are some concerns that the current UK level inquiry will not address issues around care home provision in Northern Ireland in sufficient depth. At the time of writing the union is seeking to address this through engagement with the inquiry team and relevant ministers. The UK level inquiry will begin taking evidence in

## Chapter two

### Speaking up for our members

---

#### Social care

The past twelve months have continued to present many challenges to UNISON social care members and their union has been there with them every step of the way. UNISON has supported members through the continuing pandemic, mandatory vaccination in care homes and pushing for proper sick pay and investment in social care wages. Our union has been at the forefront of campaigning for a solution to the social care crisis, placing a long-term people plan and a publicly funded and publicly provided national care service at the forefront of the policy debate. Two years into the pandemic, UNISON is now widely recognised as the leading trade union in social care by workers, employers, commissioners and government.

UNISON has successfully campaigned against mandatory vaccination being extended to the wider care sector (and health) in England and forced the reversal of this policy in care homes. This is covered in more detail in chapter one.

Our general secretary co-chairs the Future Social Care Coalition which produced a “People Plan Framework” in 2021, showing government how to plan for and invest in the social care workforce in England, supported by other unions, employers and commissioners. Tragically, the Government’s social care white paper does little to address the problems of fragmentation, low pay and underfunding. UNISON has commissioned research on the impact that private sector investment vehicles when they take over care homes. This new research should make a significant impact on the policy debate about profit making in the sector and is due to be published later in 2022.

In January 2022, thousands of our social care members in England stepped up and emailed their councillors, asking them to ensure new funding for care worker pay reached the front line. 2843 care worker members emailed their councillors. Following the campaign, UNISON received numerous reports of councils providing bonuses and rises for care workers. This campaign follows from the government’s Infection Control Fund which failed to guarantee care workers full normal wages for periods of self-isolation. UNISON has written to the Public Accounts Committee to ask for an investigation into how the £1.75 billion fund has been spent.

Social care reform is moving at a different pace and a more positive direction in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Wherever it occurs, UNISON is at the forefront of

shaping change in social care. In Wales, UNISON is working in partnership with Welsh Government to introduce fair work provisions for care workers, including the Real Living Wage, a £1500 care worker payment, sectoral collective bargaining and increasing trade union membership. In Scotland, UNISON submitted a detailed response to the consultation on the establishment of a National Care Service and continues to push hard for positive reform which drives up standards of care and the way care workers are paid and treated. In Northern Ireland, UNISON is also positively engaged with proposals to reform the sector.

UNISON regional staff continue to work closely with branches across the country on social care campaigns. UNISON North West's Social Care Campaign has won Foundation Living Wage commitments for 2022/23 from a number of commissioning councils - including Cheshire West and Chester, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale and Salford. A number of other councils have made the commitment from 2023/24 and UNISON is working hard to organise members to pressure councils to bring these agreements forward. In Southwark, Greater London, UNISON won a commitment for the council to be the first to sign up to the Residential Care Charter. Regions and branches negotiated longer-term pay boosts locally in a number of areas, including significant rises and bonuses for care workers in Somerset.

---

## Public service Pay. Living wage and living standards

The government's much trailed one year pay freeze for the public sector was announced by chancellor at the November 2020 spending review. There were exceptions to the pay policy, including the NHS, which along with those earning below £24,000 pa, who were to receive a flat rate payment of £250, were explicitly exempt by the government. Local government were not formally included either on the basis that local government employers have autonomy. However, the spending allocations set out by the government meant that pay restraint was the order of the day, right across the public services.

In the run up to the spending review, UNISON fought a determined media and lobbying campaign against a pay freeze and for the chancellor to use the spending review to ensure government departments had the resource necessary to deliver pay increases that reflected

the immense sacrifice and unprecedented pressure experienced by people working across public services during the pandemic. A letter was delivered to HM Treasury with close to 40,000 signatures from members of the public who wanted to stand shoulder to shoulder with our members in calling for decent pay rises. This activity was designed to complement the pay claims being pursued by service groups.

UNISON also collaborated with other unions through the TUC in pursuit of our campaign aim of reversing the government's public sector pay policy. This included a series of virtual town hall meetings in early 2021, held on-line because of the lock down. These meetings involved UNISON and other trade union members inviting their MPs, including those from Tory marginal constituencies, to hear first-hand from their constituents about the impact of the pay freeze on, for example, living standards and recruitment and retention. The process culminated in an on-line rally at which Christina McAnea and other general secretaries spoke alongside public service workers and MPs.

The government formally announced an end to pay freeze at the October 2021 autumn statement and comprehensive spending review. UNISON ran a high-profile campaign on social media and in print media in both the preceding local elections in May 2021 and the period immediately running up to the announcement. This featured striking imagery of public service workers in scenes depicting the pandemic with hard hitting messages directed at the chancellor.

In spring 2021, UNISON made a comprehensive submission to the Low Pay Commission. This argued that if the Low Pay Commission was to truly address the scale of in-work poverty in the UK, it must make recommendations that both deliver a real living wage and curtail forms of contract that are vulnerable to imposition of inadequate hours to achieve a reasonable standard of living, including legislation to limit the use of zero hours contract, prevention of the bogus classification of workers as "self-employed" and the extension of employment rights of "workers."

Throughout this period, members have seen the cost-of-living crisis hit their living standards. In March 2022, the union is keeping up the lobbying and campaign pressure to ensure that spring budget delivers for public services and those that deliver them right across the UK. Inflation was forecast to reach levels not seen in more than a decade even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, the fallout from this conflict is increasing these pressures

significantly. Plans are underway for a TUC demo on June 18th in London. The campaign fund committee is exploring how to make it easy for branches to bid for resources to mount local campaigns on the cost of living.

---

## No Going Back to Normal campaign

No Going Back to Normal has been the main vehicle for UNISON's public services campaigning since the first lockdown in March 2020. The campaign themes were identified and agreed upon in discussions at on-line meetings of the policy development and campaigns committee. At the time members of the public were coming out on to their doorsteps every Thursday evening to clap for carers and there was a newly found recognition of the reliance of communities and wider society on key workers. The No Going Back to Normal Campaign was so named because of a determination to ensure that these important lessons and realisations were not lost – and that public sympathy could be harnessed towards addressing the economic and societal injustices that the pandemic had revealed.

The campaign was built around four themes.

- Rebuild all our public services, by making money available to employ and train the number of staff that are needed to ensure our services are there when you need them.
- Give public sector workers a decent pay rise because the pandemic has shown how important they are. This would also help the lowest paid out of in-work poverty
- Create fairer, COVID safe workplaces where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, everyone's contribution is valued, where the dedication of those key workers isn't exploited and where there is sufficient PPE for those that need it
- Build a more equal post COVID-19 society, in which the inequalities that have become so evident during the crisis are addressed as a matter of urgency

Because of social distancing and the difficulties of workplace-based campaign activity, the focus of the campaign was on advertising, including out of home and press advertising and short social media films, which were viewed more than 1.2 million times.

---

## Local Elections 2022 (and Northern Ireland Assembly)

At the time of writing, many UNISON activists were already spending time campaigning in the run up to May elections. Elections were to take place in 21 unitary authorities in England, 33 metropolitan boroughs in England, 60 non-metropolitan districts in England, 33 London councils, all 32 councils in Scotland and all 22 councils in Wales. Northern Ireland was due, on the same day, to be holding elections for the Legislative Assembly. Most of the council seats up for election were last contested in 2018. The political landscape of the UK has clearly undergone huge changes in the past four years. UNISON messaging focussed on the need to send a clear message to the government on their hypocrisy over lock down rules and the way in which their response to the cost-of-living crisis expected greater sacrifices from the least well off.

---

## 2022 – the Year of the Disabled Worker

After two years during which disabled members have faced unprecedented challenges, UNISON has made 2022 the Year of Disabled Workers.

We want to use these 12 months to highlight the experience of our disabled members, the value they bring to our union and to the workplace, and to call for better enforcement of legal rights including the right to reasonable adjustments at work.

The whole union, from branches to regions and from service groups to self-organised groups, has been getting behind the Year of Disabled Workers. We have been raising awareness of our disabled members, celebrating their contribution to the union, and working locally and nationally to get employers to give disabled workers the support they should be getting by law.

Over the course of 2022 we will be running a packed programme of training, webinars, in person events, campaigns and other activities.

With 200,000 disabled members already, we are already the union for disabled workers – but we want to make sure disabled members are at the heart of our union. We encourage all branches, regions, service groups and SOGs to get involved in the year of disabled workers.

---

## Getting to Net Zero and Greening Public Services

Our green reps, in UNISON branches across the UK, are already working with members and employers to prepare for the challenges and opportunities they face in moving away from the climate emergency and towards a more sustainable future.

A survey of members was undertaken, and a report has been prepared for UNISON, on members' perceptions of the transition to a low carbon economy. Despite the key focus on dealing with the COVID pandemic, 372 members of UNISON responded to the survey which was launched in UNISON Green Week in October 2021.

The key survey report findings were:

- Overall, most members are positive about the changes of a future green economy although some still feel unsure what the benefits will actually be
- 50% state that actions are underway in their workplace to reduce carbon emissions
- Only 17.7% said they were involved in consultation over relevant changes and received any relevant training on net zero plans
- 63.3% however didn't feel confident their organisation was able to decarbonise
- A wide range of suggestions were made by members as to ways that their organisation could invest to reduce carbon emissions and they also highlight a wide range of benefits for their organisation of making these changes
- Popular support was for public investment in renewable energy, retrofitting and public transport with some focussing on public ownership
- Access to free training and re-skilling and good quality jobs locally were seen as key elements of the just transition
- UNISON members reject a 'laissez faire' approach of an unregulated, business-led green transition, with high importance placed on union-management plans, worker and community engagement

UNISON members participated and supported activities in the build-up and during the Glasgow COP26 in November 2021. UNISON joined the COP26 Coalition and in particular the trade union caucus to help mobilise members for the Global Day of Climate Action rallies across the UK. UNISON Scotland played a key role promoting UNISONs work on climate change during the COP26.

The general secretary launched UNISONs ground-breaking

report *Getting to Net Zero in Public Services: The Road to Decarbonisation*. The report identifies much needed action and opportunities for the decarbonisation of public services.

In the next few years, the NEC will continue to prioritise our post Glasgow COP26 agenda on decarbonisation of public services, focusing on UNISON's unique role to negotiate and work with the government and employers in a social partnership approach to reach net zero and decarbonise public services.

---

## Exiting the EU & Post Brexit Campaigns

### Workers' rights

On the 31 January 2020 the UK exited the EU. UNISON, along with unions in the UK and Europe and key political alliances in the UK parliament and EU Commission, campaigned for four long years in Brexit negotiations to get a good deal for workers and public services to be in the final Brexit deal ratified in the Free trade deal the 'EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement' (TCA) April 2021.

We secured a key principle in the agreement called the 'Level Playing Field', which means that neither the UK nor EU countries should lower standards on workers' rights. TUPE, holiday pay, equal pay, equal treatment, equal pension rights, maternity rights, carers' rights, women's health and safety at work, protection from sexual harassment at work, flexible working and part time and agency workers' rights, GDPR and data protection rights are key rights we are upholding against any government attempts to weaken or remove them either domestically or in global trade agreements.

UNISON supported the TUCs launch of its report 'Protecting workers' rights using the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement' in January 2022. Along with the TUC and ETUC we will continue to make sure that the TCA cannot be used as a means to reduce our hard-won rights. Instead, UNISON between now and 2026 we will continue to campaign with the TUC for the TCA to include stronger rights such as:

- give trade unions the power to bring cases when our rights are attacked;
- remove the high bar requiring proof that violations of Level Playing Field commitment affect trade; and

- oblige the UK to at least keep up with improvements in EU standards of rights

---

### Settled Status for EU Citizens and Frontier workers

UNISON also campaigned with the 3millions to get the best settled status deal for EU citizens in the UK of which an estimated 80,000 are UNISON members. UNISON published branch guidance to support EU members get ready for settled status by June 2021, we supported the training and qualifying of UNISON members to give application support and advice. UNISON continues to liaise with the 3millions in monitoring and reviewing how settled status is working and to ensure that our EU members get easy access and advice in the application process and issues concerning the 'digital status'.

UNISON Northern Ireland continues to actively campaign to protect and enhance rights under the common travel area. We have opposed provisions in the Nationality and Borders Bill that would introduce prior 'Electronic Travel Authorizations' for non-Irish EEA citizens crossing the land border into Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland, as this would represent a clear manifestation of a hard border in the island of Ireland and a significant diminution of rights.

---

### Northern Ireland Protocol

Throughout the Brexit negotiations, the protection of the Good Friday Agreement and the prevention of a hard border were priorities across the whole union. Northern Ireland remains aligned to the EU single market and customs union as a result of the protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland contained within the Withdrawal Agreement, (commonly known as the Northern Ireland Protocol).

UNISON Northern Ireland is working with allies across civic society to highlight the significant risks that triggering Article 16 of the protocol would bring. We have engaged with the UK Government and European Union institutions at senior levels to make these points directly to them.

Securing protections for the rights of our members, their families and their communities remains a key priority. The Northern Ireland Protocol contains a commitment that there will be no diminution of certain rights as a result of Brexit. Our main focus is on ensuring this commitment is realised and that rights are not only protected as they stand, but

develop over time in line with any progressive change at the European level. UNISON is pressing for the Government in Northern Ireland (which uniquely has devolved powers over employment and equality laws) to commit not to erode these rights, regardless of whatever actions the UK Government may take further to its review of retained EU law.

Within the Equality Coalition (co-convened by UNISON Northern Ireland and supported by the UNISON Campaign Fund) we have identified a number of areas where we believe that diminution of rights is likely to occur as a result of measures being pursued by the UK Government following Brexit. We are raising these issues with the 'Dedicated Mechanism' established under Article 2 of the protocol to monitor the protection of rights.

---

### International

Christina McAnea wrote to then international trade secretary Liz Truss in January 2021 calling for the United Kingdom to support the waiving of intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines which would allow for their mass production to overcome the stark inequality in vaccination rates between countries in the global North and those in the global South. UNISON was the first union in the UK to do this, campaigning with our global union Public Services International, and lobbied both the TUC and Labour Party to support the move.

To mark the fifth anniversary of the peace agreement in Colombia UNISON and Justice for Colombia published a report naming the nearly one thousand people (trade unionists, environmental activists, and leaders of the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities) who have been murdered since that agreement.

UNISON developed further resources and supported branches to call for the Local Government Pension Scheme to engage with and divest from companies involved the illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank. We continue to oppose government plans to restrict this work with new laws requiring public bodies to follow UK foreign policy in their purchasing, procurement and investment decisions.

In December, we published 'Talking about Palestinian Rights' to give activists a better understanding of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory from a trade union and public service perspective and strengthen our campaigning.

We established a new project with the MAAN workers' association to organise Palestinians working in the illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank and improve their rights. And continued to play an active role in the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and European Trade Union Network for Justice in Palestine to further our work.

Our trade union partners in Turkey have continued to endure regular attacks from the government, including the arrest and ongoing trials of many leading trade unionists. UNISON responded with a range of actions targeting the Turkish and UK governments and continued to monitor the trials of trade unionists. We worked with Solidarity with the People of Turkey to develop new campaign resources in Turkey.

We have worked with the Corporate Justice Coalition to further develop the call for a new UK 'Business, Human Rights and Environment Act' to prevent companies and the public sector supply chain activity from harming people to hold them properly accountable if harm occurs. This includes developing a UNISON position for how the public sector should be included in the scope of the law.

We have furthered our work to support workers and their unions in the PPE medical rubber glove and electronics public sector supply chain: leading to more systematic action by our partner Electronics Watch on union busting and the right to join trade unions and collectively bargain; and work to support workers and their union in Ansell's Sri Lankan glove factory and in the judicial review against the government for continuing to include Super Max as a potential supplier despite a forced labour ban in the USA.

UNISON continued to lead the UK trade union response in support of Myanmar workers' resistance to the February 2021 military coup.

The International Development Fund continued to support a project with The Building Workers International (BWI) on the Qatar World Cup post-pandemic to improve the rights and organising capacity of Philippine and African migrant workers and took action to press for the English Football Association to back the call for a permanent migrant worker's resource centre as a legacy of the games.

We were able to secure funding for the UNISON International Development Fund which will allow the fund to continue to support projects with trade unions in need around the world.

---

## Windrush, Migrant workers and the hostile environment

The 'hostile environment' is a set of punitive anti-immigrant measures which requires employers, landlords, private sector workers, NHS staff and other public servants to check a person's immigration status before they can offer them a job, housing, healthcare or other support. This became particularly dangerous during a pandemic which placed migrant workers on the frontlines of both a hostile government and COVID-19 response. A combination of the hostile environment, the paralysis of the normal functioning of Home Office visa services and the impact of "No Recourse to Public Funds" meant that migrant worker members needed vital support from UNISON. The union also played a key role in working with NHS employers, the DHSC and the Home Office to resolve critical problems for branches and members. UNISON's free immigration advice helpline for members run by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) was a lifeline for migrant worker members during the pandemic.

Activities included:

- playing a key role in forcing the Government into a U-turn on the immigration health surcharge for health and social care workers
- promoting guidance on the new reimbursement scheme and ensuring that some of the lowest paid workers in health and social care were able to get back thousands of pounds each for their families
- securing a key concession to the new Immigration Act ensuring that the Government would have to conduct an independent audit of the impact of the Act on the social care sector
- running briefing sessions and webinars on issues for migrant workers at national, regional and branch level to support the work of regions and service groups
- providing advice and support for branches across the UK to help individual members facing the loss of their job and even the threat of deportation
- campaigning for improvements to the EU Settled Status scheme and providing advice, support and briefings for regions and branches about the EU Settled Status Scheme for eligible members.

The UNISON charity 'There for You' also played an invaluable role which helped countless migrant workers to feed their children while working on the pandemic front line.

However, we continue to campaign and lobby relentlessly

for the broad policy changes needed to make the UK a more humane place for our migrant worker members, including suspending 'NRPF', scrapping the immigration health surcharge for all migrant workers, dismantling the hostile environment and granting indefinite leave to remain (ILR) to all key workers who worked on the COVID-19 frontline. Granting ILR to all key workers would mitigate the administrative complexity of managing our complicated immigration rules in order to relieve the financial burden on migrant keyworkers. It would also be a gesture of gratitude to migrant key workers.

---

## The Windrush Scandal

Campaigning for justice for the Windrush generation continues to be a key priority for UNISON. This is due to shockingly slow progress in compensating victims, addressing historic wrongs and changing the culture that treated people so unjustly. The compensation scheme has placed victims under scrutiny, made heavy evidentiary demands, treated their claims with scepticism and placed their applications, and lives, in limbo. People who have had their lives devastated have received further heartache. Seeking an acknowledgement of the wrong done to them, they have been met with something that has felt less like justice and more often resembled the bureaucratic nightmare that led them to seek compensation in the first place. Too many people have died, still waiting for justice. UNISON called last year for the compensation scheme to be moved away from the Home Office to an independent body.

In July 2021, the Public Accounts Committee found that the Home Office had failed the Windrush generation a second time. It noted the scheme's complexity, the inadequacy of support given to applicants for the compensation scheme, a lack of empathy towards the impact of its policies, and a lack of appropriate resourcing for the scheme. By the end of September 2021, only 864 people had received compensation out of a possible 15,000.

In addition to this, there is little evidence that the Home Office is building a more compassionate culture, with attempts to enshrine in legislation the principle that those with overseas heritage possess British citizenship as a "privilege not a right". This is precisely the attitude that led to the Windrush scandal in the first place. Further attempts to give legal protection to Border Force officials if refugees die during operations to "turn back" boats in the channel speaks to a culture that holds the lives of those who get

caught up in Home Office operations as politically and morally expendable. With desperate refugees risking their lives to cross the channel, an actual culture change in the Home Office would prioritise providing safe and legal routes, not ineffective and inhumane 'get tough' schemes. UNISON continues to lobby and campaign against the proposals contained in the Nationality and Borders Bill which is making its way through parliament at the time of writing.

UNISON has also called for an end to deportation flights where people who have lived in the UK since childhood are being deported to countries they don't know. It demonstrates that the thinking and practices that created the Windrush scandal are alive and well.

---

## Anti-Protest Policing Bill

The Police, Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill is a mammoth populist, multifaceted attack on our rights that mainly consists of serious, basic threats to our civil liberties including:

- (i) widening the scope of laws that already disproportionately impact Black and minority communities, such as Stop and Search and laws making life for Gypsy and Roma traveller communities almost impossible
- (ii) introducing new duties on frontline workers (including youth workers) that will break down hard-won relationships of trust by forcing them to share private data, no matter what other legal assurances of confidentiality are given
- (iii) placing avoiding 'causing serious unease' (an undefined and unmeasurable concept) as more important than our historic right to peacefully protest.

Many of the measures in this Bill appear to be a disproportionate, kneejerk, reactionary response to specific incidents rather than evidence-based response to legitimate concerns.

UNISON has several serious concerns about this proposed legislation which could seriously affect our ability to protest effectively and free from undue interference.

---

## Protest

One of the most obviously controversial sections for us as



a trade union is the section on the policing of protests. It is important to note that, unlike other sections of the Bill, there was no white or green paper consultation on the measures around protests. It drastically limits the right to protest. Specifically, it limits the areas in which they may take place, increases criminal penalties for people who fall foul of police-imposed conditions and establishes new offences and criminal penalties altogether. The cumulative effect of these measures – which target the tools that make protest rights meaningful – constitute an attack on a fundamental building block of our democracy.

---

### The definition of “nuisance”

The point of a demonstration is to be heard and to have an impact – the explicit aim of this Bill is to minimise impact. Part 3 of the Bill empowers the police to intervene to stop peaceful processions and assemblies in circumstances where the sole complaint is that the protest is too noisy.

---

### Sentencing

The proposals in this Bill mean that a person liable for nuisance could be liable for ten years in prison, an unlimited fine or both. This will mean peaceful protestors who have caused inconvenience but no damage – or damage but no inconvenience – will, for the first time, be facing lengthy and disproportionate prison sentences.

---

### Threats to picketing rights

As written, it appears the police may impose conditions on those legitimately, but noisily, picketing their place of work to persuade others not to work during a lawful industrial dispute where the workplace is involved in food, water, power, railways, buses, planes, ships, newspapers, mail, TV, radio, film, education, health, local government, civil service or other critical public services. On this basis it is hard to think of workplaces which will not be included. Despite amendments being proposed that would make it clear legal pickets would not be affected, the government declined to make that clarification.

UNISON has lobbied and engaged at every point during the swift passage of this Bill with the aim of removing these damaging clauses wholesale. Supporting the drafting of amendments and briefing Lords and MPs on our concerns

while the government controversially sought to introduce even more draconian measures at the last minute by stealth. We have engaged independently and joined with Liberty to encourage members to engage by signing petitions and directly contacting their MP’s.

---

### Threats to the Human Rights Act

The UK Human Rights Act has been a significant curb to this governments most excessive attempts to dismantle our democratic, and fundamental, rights and it is no surprise that they now seek to dilute the act itself.

The UK’s Human Rights Act safety net is a crucial source of legal protection for people across the country. It provides a means for those who have been mistreated or failed by the system to challenge their treatment and hold authorities to account. It has been vital in securing rights for many of our members including for the LGBT+ community and for disabled people with physical or mental impairments. It provides essential protection for all of us when we’re at our most vulnerable.

UNISON members, working hard to provide us with essential public services, rely on the Human Rights Act to support and defend them in the course of their jobs and to ensure we are protected at our most vulnerable.

In practice, it is often the case that the HRA has had an effect without resorting to the courts and that reminding relevant bodies of the rights, and their duties to uphold them, resolves most issues at an early stage. However, UNISON’s position is that where this fails it is vital that everyone has full access to the law to have their human rights upheld in practice and not just on paper.

As expected, these proposals are being suggested as merely ‘sensible tweaks’ and a ‘necessary re-balancing’ but they are much more than that. The proposal is to replace the UK Human Rights Act and replace it with a weaker Bill of Rights. The government’s own independent review concluded that no change was required and yet the consultation suggests major proposals that threaten to dramatically reduce the rights and access to redress.

Perhaps most worryingly, there is a deeply concerning narrative running through the consultation document setting up a division between humans who deserve human rights and those that do not.

UNISON believes the HRA is working and there is no evidence-based case for change. Our current evidence-based policy position is to retain, protect and expand the current Human Rights Act in full. UNISON has responded robustly to the current consultation and will fully engage with any move to dilute current legislation.

---

## Public Procurement

---

### Public Procurement: Anti-privatisation and insourcing

Upon Brexit, the government set out its new proposals on reforming public procurement in England in its green paper Transforming public procurement in December 2020. UNISON set out a detailed response calling for the right for all public authorities to organise and deliver quality public services in the public interest, free from mandatory marketisation, privatisation and outsourcing. UNISON called on the Government to use the new procurement regulations to showcase and promote the increased trend of public authorities reversing privatisations and bringing services back in house or maintaining in-house services, both known as insourcing.

Public procurement is a devolved matter. In early 2021, UNISON developed key procurement principles agreed between our devolved regions of Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland and across our service groups so that our members and public services could expect the same principled campaign on public procurement wherever they lived or whatever service group they were in.

---

### UNISON Public Procurement principles

UNISON believes that all public service delivery should be devolved and public. Market and global investment access to UK public services should be removed from all global free trade agreements (FTAs) and re-ownership of all publicly funded services are essential to the provision of quality sustainable public services.

In Spring 2021, UNISON produced a new manifesto for UK public procurement and sent it to UK councillors, MPs, MSPs, members of the Senedd, and key civil society stakeholders and alliances. The manifesto promoted the opportunity the UK now has to develop a progressive trade

and public procurement regulation framework that supports local people and places based on an inclusive transition to modern, quality, sustainable, green and digital public services that leaves no one behind.

This inclusion, based on a new social contract with workers and citizens, must be at the heart of a new public procurement regime. Funding, upskilling and training of the workforce, recognition of collective bargaining, participatory local democracy and a commitment to protect human rights, including in public procurement activities are critical to the success of modernising our public procurement regimes.

UNISON has used its new seat on the Department of International Trades' (DIT) working group looking at public procurement in UK free trade agreements (FTAs), to raise concerns to keep public services out of FTAs and prevent any easy liberalisation of UK public services, particularly the NHS, in deals with Japan, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the future deals with India and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), a trade agreement amongst 11 countries including Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam.

We are expecting a new Public Procurement Bill in 2022/23 for England and for devolved nations to review their own procurement regimes considering any new Westminster legislation. In preparation of the Bill, UNISON has set up a working campaign group of key alliances including the Labour shadow front bench in parliament and equivalent procurement portfolio holders in the devolved assemblies and parliaments.

---

## Housing

UNISON continues to campaign for genuinely affordable housing for our members and citizens, and for improved rights and protections for them across the housing system.

We have worked with campaign alliances to call for changes in housing policy. Last year, UNISON published a major report: "A decent place to live: Homes fit for Key Workers", which laid bare the housing crisis blighting the lives of citizens across all nations in: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The report found a lack of adequate investment in decent and genuinely affordable homes that can be accessed by key workers across all public services. It made a number of

recommendations, including a call for significant investment in council housing, which is in short supply. It was disseminated widely to parliamentarians and councillors across the nations. The key recommendations in the report, alongside UNISON's housing manifesto, underpin our campaigning activities across a wide range of housing issues.

UNISON updated its housing affordability tool, to include housing information for all the nations. The tool looks at the relative costs of housing and calculates how long it will take for workers to save and purchase a home in their local area based on their income. It also allows users to tweet or email their MP to take action on housing issues.

Last year, UNISON supported a “Renter’s Day” organised by Generation Rent, in calling for a new renters’ reform legislation, to include measures to improve housing security and stability in private renting, such as open-ended tenancies, longer notice periods and safeguards to prevent tenants from being unfairly evicted from their homes.

Over the past year, UNISON has met with politicians to discuss solutions to the housing crisis, this work is ongoing. UNISON continues to respond to key national and government consultations on housing, which have been published on the UNISON website. They include our response to the HCLG Select Committee Inquiry into COVID-19 impact on the homeless and private renters, in which we highlighted that the pandemic has exposed renters to financial hardship, with many accruing rent arrears; and called for longer-term support for renters.

---

## Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital technology in the workplace

Over the last few years, the use of AI and digital technology has phenomenally increased at an alarming rate in the workplace. It is now being used to not only deliver public services but also manage workers and organise how employees work.

This unprecedented roll out of AI and digital tools and data collection is happening amidst a lack of understanding or implementation of employers’ obligations and employees’ rights. Since 2019, UNISON has increased its AI campaign and policy focus on this fundamental unequal balance of power in the workplace, breaches of equality and human rights and the need to redress the law to close protection

gaps for workers and the delivery of public services.

Since 2020, UNISON has developed key alliances with legal and civil society organisations such as Big Brother Watch, medConfidential and the Trade Justice Movement. UNISON has also developed its campaign expertise as part of a team of trade union experts participating and leading in the TUC AI working group and with our European (EPSU) and international federations (Public Service International (PSI) as digital rights organisers.

UNISON’s main AI campaign is to close the legal gap around workers’ rights, data protection (campaign for a UKGDPR+), the introduction of new technology uses in the workplace and protect public services from being privatised through the backdoor by big tech contracts.

We are also campaigning for workers to have a say in how AI is used at work – transparency and explainability – and regulations on the design and use of algorithms in decision-making in service delivery. If this is left to employers and tech companies, workers’ rights and interests will be overlooked.

UNISON signed up to the TUC Manifesto – Dignity at work and the AI Revolution in 2021 and encouraged branches to sign up to it jointly with their employers. UNISON has also updated its guidance on *Bargaining over the use of new technology in the workplace incorporating monitoring and surveillance, and automation guidance*. Data protection impact assessments and technology agreements must become core to collective bargaining with employers.

In November 2021, the UK government began a review of our data laws proposing a serious downgrade of our data protection rights set out in its consultation, ‘Data: a new direction’, focused on reforming the UK’s data protection regime by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). UNISON responded outlining key concerns.

UNISON will continue to campaign on key AI and technology use for the benefit of everyone, so that these new technologies will not be able to entrench inequalities, unfair treatment and unsafe working practices.

---

## Equalities

The extent to which the covid pandemic has exposed and worsened inequality has meant even this Westminster

Government has not been able to ignore yawning disparities. UNISON’s specific response to COVID and equality is covered in chapter one.

However, few of these equality issues are new. Disadvantaged groups of workers – members of UNISON self-organised and young members group – are concentrated in low-paid and insecure work. This is revealed in persistent equality pay gaps, which UK government initiatives have failed to address. UNISON continues to pursue pay equality through campaigning on proper enforcement and negotiating on equality bargaining issues specific to each group of workers.

Other key equality campaigns include:

- better enforcement of the Equality Act
- a stronger right to flexible working and to homeworking as a reasonable adjustment
- pensions equality and the breaking of the triple lock on state pensions
- feeding UNISON’s views and members’ experiences into government, parliamentary and other equality consultations
- campaigning around the Government’s National Disability Strategy
- embedding legislative gains on tackling sexual harassment and domestic abuse
- preparing for the forthcoming, albeit delayed, Employment Bill, in which we want to see rights to flexible and home working, and carers’ leave.

As always, our campaigning work sits alongside equality bargaining. Headline issues include bargaining pay inequality; challenging racism in the workplace; the health-specific **Race for Equality** and **Disable Inequality** campaigns; carers’ leave; maternity and paternity rights; domestic abuse; menopause; flexible working; reasonable adjustments and Access to Work; accessibility passports and disability leave; challenging LGBT+ harassment and discrimination; trans workers’ rights and developing trans allies; sexual harassment; mental health and hate crime.

UNISON equality bargaining advice is widely promoted and widely used.

Our equality groups continue to meet regularly with a welcome return to in person decision making conferences for disabled, LGBT+ and young members last autumn, and online decision-making conferences for retired, women and Black

members. A packed programme of equality webinars and online training events was started because of the pandemic. Many of these will continue, alongside in-person meetings.

---

## Women members

The gender pay gap will remain stubbornly wide until the support and caring jobs women tend to do are properly valued. UNISON continues to campaign for a new legal requirement for employers to report on their action plans to reduce pay gaps. UNISON is also campaigning for the right to flexible working from day 1, a requirement to advertise all jobs as flexible, and for better parental leave and maternity benefits as part of a package of measures to close this gap.

UNISON welcomed the announcement by the UK government last July that it will introduce a new duty on employers to protect all their staff from sexual harassment at work and protections for workers harassed by clients or customers as well as colleagues. This is a victory for UNISON and the TUC-led campaign on workplace sexual harassment.

However, there is little sign yet of the promised change in the law. We need a properly enforceable law so that all employers make prevention a priority and can be held to account if they do not act. One long term goal was achieved this March when the UK government finally ratified ILO convention 190 on Violence and Harassment.

UNISON worked closely with Jess Phillips MP, shadow minister for domestic violence and safeguarding, as the Domestic Abuse Bill went through the legislative process in Parliament last year. We were successful in achieving recognition in the Act that domestic abuse is a workplace matter. UNISON is very proud to have won an amendment that protects victims at work from their perpetrators. The Bill became Law in April 2021.

Over two-thirds of pensioners living in poverty are women. The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, has suspended the triple lock formula for increases in state pensions for 1 year. This action will push even more women, who have lower pensions because many work in low-paid jobs, into pension poverty. UNISON is calling for the restoration and maintenance of the triple lock.

UNISON continues to support the WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) campaign – pension justice for thousands of women born in the 1950’s whose retirement

age was raised by the Government with inadequate notice to make alternative plans. UNISON is committed to campaigning for fair state pensions for all women, including future generations.

The UK has some of the highest childcare costs in Europe. We know that childcare costs represent a key area of expenditure for many public services staff (UNISON surveys have consistently found that around a third of staff have child caring responsibilities).

UNISON is calling for affordable/free wrap around childcare; a cap on childcare cost increases; the right to flexible working (rather than the right to request); improved statutory maternity pay; extended and properly paid paternity leave and additional support for the parents of disabled children.

Domestic violence has surged to become a ticking timebomb and violence against women is rife. UNISON continues to campaign on violence against women. We submitted our response to the Labour Party's green paper on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls in January 2022.

Women's health is influenced by the jobs they do, their family responsibilities and their biology. UNISON considers that a women's health strategy should include health and well-being in the workplace, work-life balance and occupational hazards as well as biological matters. We demanded a gender sensitive approach to health and well-being matters in the government's women's health strategy and were successful in getting a section in the plan published December 2021 on women's health in the workplace.

UNISON has long campaigned to help employers understand the effects of the menopause and strongly believes that it should be considered a workplace issue with nearly eight out of 10 menopausal women being in work and almost six in 10 women saying their symptoms have had a negative impact on their work.

Menopause also affects trans and non- binary people. That's why UNISON calls for meaningful workplace support for anyone experiencing the menopause. UNISON branches have used UNISON model policies to win ground-breaking workplace agreements including in March 2022 with the Mayor of London. The new City Hall policy aims to ensure that the working environment is comfortable wherever possible, including the possibility of temperature-controlled

areas, as well as allowing for flexible adjustments in the working day, whether that be taking breaks for severe symptoms or time off to attend medical appointments.

Defending abortion rights is an important issue for UNISON. Access to abortion is a trade union issue. It is important that we have international solidarity across our movement, to passionately defend every woman's, or person's, right to choose. On 2nd October last year, UNISON was proud to stand in solidarity with the thousands who marched in cities across the UK, and in other parts of the world to protest the new limits on abortions in Texas – just one of many attacks by governments around the world on a woman's right to choose. As part of our programme to mark International Women's Day 2022 UNISON's international and women's committees hosted a well-attended webinar with speakers from Argentina, the USA, Northern Ireland and Britain on defending abortion rights.

---

## Black members

UNISON continues to prioritise work on race equality, with the pandemic exposing the reality of structural, institutional and individual racism and how these impact on Black members. Led by our Black members, race equality is at the heart of UNISON's work, whether it involves bargaining and negotiating for members; growing our membership; challenging pay freezes, reorganisations, training, challenging redundancies or organising our member around campaigns that matter most to them.

UNISON has consistently challenged the UK government on its failure to tackle racial disparities, calling for action to tackle the ethnicity pay gap, for proper resourcing and stronger enforcement powers for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and for an end to the 'hostile environment'.

UNISON's campaign to tackle the ethnicity pay gap was launched in 2021, in partnership with Dianne Greyson's Ethnicity Pay Gap UK Campaign. UNISON is campaigning for mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting, accompanied by a requirement to publish an action plan setting out what the employer is doing to close the gap. A successful webinar in January 2022 is being followed up with parliamentary and other campaigning work. This is essential to identify disparities within workforces and make employers accountable.

The ethnicity pay gap campaign sits alongside UNISON's well-established work on challenging racism in the

workplace, promoting the race discrimination protocol, training for activists and specific service group campaigns such as the health group Race for Equality campaign.

UNISON is playing a leading role in the TUC Anti-Racism Taskforce, which is supporting the union movement in progressing, building, and advancing our racial justice commitments. Each union is now urged to develop their own action plans, with Black members networks at the heart of those plans. Discussion is underway with the national Black members committee on using this opportunity to review and refresh our anti-racist work.

UNISON continues to work closely with Stand up to Racism and Show Racism the Red Card. The launch of the Show Racism the Red Card schools competition in February 2022 saw a rise in participants despite the impact of COVID on schools over the pandemic.

We also work with the Runnymede Trust, responding to their call for evidence on the 2021 UN Convention on the elimination on all forms of discrimination and on the Migrant Rights and Race Equality Summit organised they are organising with the TUC this summer.

UNISON has adopted the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) definition of Islamophobia. The effects of decades of institutional racism and the need to challenge the myths and build on UNISON's political influence.

UNISON Cymru/Wales had a significant role leading up to the announcement that Black History will now be taught as part of the national curriculum in Wales.

A review of the history curriculum beyond Wales was one of the commitments when, in March 2022, the UK government finally published its response to the discredited 2021 report of the Commission on race and ethnic disparities, under the heading 'Inclusive Britain'.

By no means all the proposals are new, and others are weak. UNISON continues to call for concrete measures to make Britain inclusive. We call on the government to use its power of public procurement to deliver equality and fairness and deliver a new social contract on race equality – to end the racial segregation in the labour market by ensuring that there is an equality clause in public contracts. Particularly as the cost-of-living crisis bites, 'Levelling Up' must mean solutions to close the equality and employment gaps and deal with structural racism at all levels.

UNISON continues to play a significant role in events to mark UN Anti-Racism Day each March. UNISON had a strong presence at events organised jointly by the TUC and Stand up to Racism in London, Glasgow, and Cardiff.

---

## Disabled members

We estimate UNISON has up to 200,000 disabled members and we believe we are now the union for disabled workers. We are leading the way on pushing for legislative changes that could see a step change in the enforcement of disabled workers' rights.

We are a founding member – and the only union – of the coalition of disabled people's organisations and charities that developed the ground-breaking Disability Employment Charter. The charter calls for a two-week deadline for responses to reasonable adjustment requests and a new right to time off for equality reps. With the government's National Disability Strategy having been found to be illegal by the High Court, the charter offers a way of achieving real change for disabled workers and UNISON is a key champion.

We have declared 2022 the year of disabled workers and have been using this to ramp up our campaigning, bargaining and organising agendas. A year of webinars, training and in-person events will be backed up by a renewed focus on getting agreements with employers and on training up disability officers in branches.

Smashing the disability pay gap is high on our agenda. A survey of our members found that 67% were turned down for some or all of the adjustments they need while 23% had to wait a year or more to get agreed adjustments put in place. Lack of reasonable adjustments leads to increased sickness absence and many of our members report losing their jobs, being forced to reduce their hours or having to find work elsewhere out of desperation. This is a key cause of the disability pay gap and is why it's so core to the Disability Employment Charter.

We have produced a suite of bargaining guides including on reasonable adjustments and accessibility passports and on disability leave. We've also developed two brand new guides to representing disabled and deaf members to ensure we are offering the best quality representation to our members. And we have launched a new campaign, 'Disable Inequality', to challenge disability discrimination in the NHS.

We regularly running our very popular branch disabled members' officers and contracts training, with every session oversubscribed and more in the pipeline. Our email bulletin for disabled members continues to spread the word about key disability equality campaigns—to receive a copy, log into MyUNISON and update your status to “disabled”.

---

## LGBT+ members

There was risk that LGBT+ people were hidden figures in the pandemic. Isolated from support usually available, and with hate crime, homelessness and domestic abuse spiking, the impact on LGBT+ mental health was unsurprising. UNISON has continued to make LGBT+ workers and our campaigns for LGBT+ equality visible throughout the pandemic, giving our members a voice.

UNISON has launched a range of new resources to support activism. We have run successful pilots of trans ally training. This aims to equip activists with the confidence and skills to push employers make workplaces more trans inclusive. This is being rolled out to all regions over the coming months and interest is very high.

UNISON's Pride in Procurement guide was launched last year, setting out considerations for Pride organising committees when procuring items and merchandise. We worked with Labour Behind the Label to help activists planning Pride events become even more informed and discerning buyers, asking the right questions about the supply chain.

UNISON's new Engaging Branches in LGBT+ recruitment and organising guide was launched at the 2021 LGBT+ conference. It gives practical advice on how to establish, facilitate and sustain an effective branch LGBT+ group. It also sets out how branch LGBT+ self-organisation links into regional and national activity and, most importantly, how members can get involved in the LGBT+ equality at UNISON.

This conference was the first LGBT+ decision making conference in two years. Despite the limitations placed on visitor numbers and guests due to the ongoing pandemic, members spoke passionately about the need for greater LGBT+ inclusion in workplaces, with a particular focus on LGBT+ mental health, engaging young LGBT+ members and more campaigning for trans equality.

These resolutions guide UNISON's overarching LGBT+ campaigns in 2022.

UNISON is continuing our push for reform to the Gender Recognition Act. While there have been positive movement from devolved governments, like the Scottish Government's proposed legislation to allow trans people to update the sex on their birth certificate more simply, without having to provide unnecessary medical 'evidence'. We will continue our campaigning to ensure every nation in the UK reforms the GRA.

We are also campaigning for a complete ban on conversion therapy. UNISON responded to the recent UK government consultation and encouraged members to respond as well. UNISON will not accept anything other than a complete ban on this practice.

Internationally, UNISON continues to be an influential voice in LGBT+ workplace equality. We have played a key role in the establishment of the Public Services International LGBT+ network and regularly participated in international LGBT+ events, raising workers' rights.

---

## Young members

UNISON's young members had a ground-breaking year in 2021 with their first ever decision-making conference in December, following a rule change at National Delegate Conference 2019. Happily, this was able to go ahead in person despite the pandemic, and young members debated issues as varied as mental health and the right to disconnect; the importance of organising apprentices; climate change and greening public services; quality jobs and career development; and domestic abuse. Despite the necessary restrictions to make sure that holding a conference during the pandemic was safe, feedback was very positive.

Following our survey of young members in 2020, we have been promoting our report 'Getting Active in UNISON' across the union and will be building on this work with a continuing project to encourage branches to recruit and organise more young workers.

Young members also organised webinars on climate change (to coincide with the COP26), the role of the young members officer, and organising and recruiting young workers. The National Young Members Forum also supported the Be on the Safe Side campaign to encourage more young members to become health and safety reps.

Work is now well underway on developing a Pathways

to activism programme for young members. There are complementary initiatives to increase the numbers of young LGBT+ and young Black activists, to support this programme.

---

## Retired members

UNISON's retired members' organisation has continued to function despite the challenges provided by the COVID pandemic. The national retired members' committee was able to hold regular virtual meetings via Teams and then Zoom platforms. Many regional meetings continued virtually, and this was beneficial to those members who felt isolated during lock-down.

In October 2021, a decision making virtual national UNISON retired members' conference was held ensuring that retired members were able to determine UNISON policy with regard to issues affecting older people.

UNISON's retired members' organisation continued to work on the following:

- Health and social care provision for older people
- Austerity and defending the living standards of older people
- Defending universal benefits
- Concessionary bus pass
- Issues arising from COVID such as access to GP services.

An ongoing objective for the national retired members' organisation is to re-engage with retired member activists and to encourage more involvement by "younger" retired members.

Despite a difficult two years, retired members continue to promote the aims and objectives of UNISON and support their working colleagues.

---

## Health and Safety campaigning

The pandemic continues to put a spotlight on the importance on health and safety and the key role that UNISON health and safety representatives play in protecting members and improving working conditions.

UNISON continued to promote our 'Be on the Safe Side' campaign to recruit more health and safety reps, particularly those in underrepresented groups.

With targeted regional campaigns and a series of national webinars we have seen 30% increase in the number of women health and safety reps who now account for 46% of all UNISON health and safety reps.

***"So many things were happening at work, in such quick succession. So, when I realised there was a role where I could potentially learn a lot more about how things should be done from a health and safety perspective, how to get a little bit of control back, ways that I could potentially help my colleagues, I thought 'I want to do that!'"***

### ***Quote from a new health and safety rep***

***'We're here to protect lives' | Magazine ([unison.org.uk](https://unison.org.uk))***

We launched the branch health and safety review tool to support organising on health and safety. The online tool gives activists the ability to scrutinise their employer's risk assessments and identify safety concerns that are not been acted on.

We have continued to use the advantages of working remotely with a national webinar for health and safety representatives during European week of safety and health on manual handling and musculoskeletal risks.

We have worked closely with equalities leads, not only to attract members from under-represented groups into becoming health and safety representative but in escalating concerns to the Health and Safety Executive including concerns about Black and disabled members who were being disproportionately impacted by covid.

On 8 March 2022, we kicked off our campaign to build safe and healthy workplaces for women with a webinar on International Women's Day. The webinar precedes the biennial health and safety conference in May, which will continue this theme.

National activity to build safe and healthy workplaces for women included working with the TUC to push for ratification of ILO Convention 190 on the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment; escalation of failures in risk assessment of pregnant workers to the Health and Safety Executive and successfully getting changes to national covid guidance on pregnancy and work.



We continue to support a number of TUC projects including work to explore the health and safety experiences of Black members and work to recruit more women into health and safety representative roles. UNISON has been invited to take the Chair the TUC's Gender and Occupational Safety and Health group.

We have worked closely with service groups supporting activity on a number of covid and non-covid related health and safety issues including work on long covid, work related stress and mental health and violence.

In response to the rise in homeworking we have supported the development of bargaining guidance on homeworking and an information sheet including health and safety rights for home workers.

As a member of the Joint Union's in Asbestos Committee we supported the launch of a report into the legacy of asbestos in school buildings, calling for safe removal. We also submitted evidence to the work and pensions select committee looking at the HSE's role and effectiveness in the management of asbestos, highlighting the impact of incidental asbestos exposure on women workers delivering public services in schools, hospitals and other buildings containing asbestos.

In 2021, the general secretary spoke alongside the deputy general secretary of the TUC at an International Workers' Memorial Day event at the COVID memorial wall to remember those who have died and to pledge to fight for better health and safety protections for workers. In 2022, we will continue to mark the day and have provided resources for branches to use locally.

We have seen a continued growth and engagement with the unit's social media platforms, with analytics for one platform showing an audience made up of 56% women and another showing a reach of 14 to 38 thousand engagements.

---

## Pensions

---

### Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

UNISON is represented on the Scheme Advisory Boards and all sub committees. There have been no changes to benefits during this period and UNISON secured a major

victory when the Government cancelled the regulations that set a set an exit cap of £95,000 on redundancy packages that particularly affected the pensions of members being made redundant over age 55.

UNISON responded to the cost cap consultations on cost share and raised concerns that in future it will be hard to pass on any benefit improvements if the cost of the schemes go down as they did in the last round of valuations.

Funding levels have improved with strong asset returns recovering for dips caused by the pandemic.

---

### McCloud Judgement

The remedies for the age discrimination case (McCloud Judgement) are progressing. At time of writing, we are expecting consultations on schemes changes that will make the remedy situation clearer. UNISON expressed concerns at the new member contribution rates for the NHS Pension Scheme from April 2022, that cuts the rates for the high paid to encourage senior staff retention but at the cost of higher contributions for lower paid.

UNISON continues to raise the issue of climate change with pension funds with our policy to campaign for net zero carbon emissions by 2030 where possible while accepting the current consensus around the government's 2050 target in some cases. UNISON ran a survey of members in Scotland that shows the strength of feeling on this issue.

---

### Investments

UNISON raises issues of socially responsible investments including engagement and disinvestments where practical. UNISON is concerned at UK government's attempts to direct where investments should be made in LGPS funds in line with their foreign and domestic policy, which we oppose. This could hinder any attempt to disinvest from companies involved in the violation of human and workers' rights and international law unless in line with UK foreign and defence policy.

---

### Private Sector Pensions

UNISON continues to oppose the worsening of pension rights across the private sector. Recent examples include

Northern Gas Networks, National Autistic Society, USS and Dundee University where UNISON has taken industrial action and talks continue. An increasing number of further education colleges are setting up arm's length companies to get round the requirement to offer the LGPS to new starters.

UNISON has launched a campaign to improve the defined contribution schemes for the increasing number of members that are in these schemes including organising to push for higher employer contributions, lower investment charges and better guidance and affordable advice.

---

## State Pension

UNISON opposed the Government breaking the triple lock method for increasing the state pension at a time when inflation will erode the value of the state pension. UNISON is responding to the review of the UK state pension age pushing for the age at which members can get their state pension to be lowered not increased. The UNISON pension unit has run many virtual pension courses and branch seminars on a number of pension topics via Teams and Zoom throughout the pandemic. More information on UNISON and pensions can be found at:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/pensions/>

---

## Cymru / Wales

---

### Social care

The Real Living Wage will be paid to all registered care workers from April 2022. In addition, Welsh government is providing them with a £1000 net payment.

The Social Care Fair Work Forum is looking at recommendations to improve pay and conditions including sectoral collective bargaining and increased trade union recognition. We're working with Welsh government to achieve their progressive objectives and we're engaging APSE to produce a business case for in-house provision of direct care in a National Care Service.

---

### Schools

Concerted pressure from UNISON resulted in the biggest

commitment government has ever made to improving teaching assistant (TA) employment conditions in February 2022. The education minister pledged to identify and improve access to a range of high-quality training for TAs and action to ensure TAs are appropriately deployed in the classroom. This is a really significant moment and UNISON will continue to press for improvements to school support staff pay and conditions.

---

### Local government

Several Welsh councils decided to insource services in 2021/22. Powys County Council's joint venture with Kier will end by July 2022, bringing maintenance staff in-house. In Blaenau Gwent, Silent Valley Waste will return to full council control.

Neath Port Talbot branch successfully campaigned for leisure services to be brought back in-house, ending 20 years of arms-length provision. Their campaign including a petition, political lobbying, social media, protests, press releases and a specially commissioned APSE report, can be a template for further insourcing success.

The two days' industrial action by Carmarthenshire County Council gritters succeeded in bringing the council back to the negotiating table after the council flouted the collective winter gritting agreement.

---

### Welsh public opinion polling to support joint pay campaign

UNISON Cymru Wales's public opinion polling to support the joint pay campaign, provided plenty of press coverage. The poll showed an overwhelming majority of Welsh people supported higher pay for police staff, council workers and NHS staff and 51% would support public service workers going on strike to receive a higher pay rise.

---

### NHS Wales pay

The imposition of the 3% PRB recommendation in Wales by the health minister was not well-received. Whilst we did eventually get to an enhanced pay offer from Welsh government which was narrowly accepted by the trade union side in Wales, UNISON members in the consultative ballot overwhelmingly voted to reject additional

enhancements which effectively amounted to a 1% bonus payment to bands 1-5, as insufficient.

UNISON's rejection sent a strong message to Welsh government and resulted in the health minister committing to early pay discussions for 2022. UNISON Cymru Wales submitted Wales-specific PRB information having had sight of the Welsh government submission.

---

### Social Partnership Act/ Fair Work

UNISON has continued to play a very active role in helping shape the Welsh government's flagship policy, the development of a social partnership act and fair work agenda. Welsh government intends to place social partnership on a statutory footing and strengthen socially responsible public procurement and this has the potential to transform the livelihoods of thousands of Welsh workers.

We're pushing the government to be as ambitious as possible and two UNISON members of staff have been seconded to Welsh government to work on the legislation, representing the whole union movement.

---

### Energy

The Cymru Wales energy service group held their first seminar in April. With expert speakers from the Welsh government minister for climate change, UNISON, public services and private industry in Wales, the seminar focussed on how we could deliver jobs and social justice in Wales whilst meeting our climate change targets.

---

### Further Education

The unions are continuing talks with the employers over our claim for additional annual leave and an all-Wales pay and grading scheme.

Welsh government is funding a pilot 'Well Aware' project in three Welsh colleges to support the mental health of staff. UCU, lead partner, and UNISON are working with the colleges to identify staff mental health concerns, raise awareness and develop resources. 'Well Aware' union reps can access funding for facility time.

---

### UNISON and the Welsh labour movement exhibition

First minister Mark Drakeford, Christina McAnea and Wales TUC general secretary, Shavanah Taj, helped launch UNISON Cymru Wales' exhibition of radical history in our Cardiff office, in November 2021. On a scale never seen in Wales, the exhibition aims to inspire a new generation to fight for their rights. It can also be viewed [virtually](#).

---

### 2021 Senedd elections

Our campaign focused on the need for investment in public services and the workers who deliver them. We created special webpages, social media graphics, a bilingual manifesto, briefing papers and videos encouraging members to vote and the Welsh media carried Cymru Wales advertising. Our opinion polling data on a national care service, a social partnership act and action to alleviate poverty garnered good press coverage.

25 Senedd candidates endorsed one or more of UNISON's manifesto priorities; 18 were successfully elected, almost a third of the Senedd.

---

### Labour Link and the Senedd elections

UNISON Labour Link played a significant role in developing Welsh Labour manifesto pledges and in the campaign itself, offering support to all Welsh Labour candidates who were also UNISON members. With the exception of Aberconwy, every constituency prioritised by Labour Link returned a Labour MS, all with an increased majority and Welsh Labour retained power with 30 of the 60 seats. With 19 MSs, UNISON's the largest union group in the Senedd.

---

### Settled status

In February 2021, Cymru Wales members were encouraged to write to their MP via a newly built campaign website asking for the UK government to extend its deadline for applications to the Settled Status Scheme.

---

### Wales Union Learning Fund

We are very pleased the Wales Union Learning Fund project has been granted three more years of funding which will

allow the excellent UNISON team to continue to offer our learning opportunities until March 2025. They will be looking at exciting new learning opportunities for those in schools, health and social care, in particular.

---

## Northern Ireland

Over the last 12 months our members in Northern Ireland delivered vital public services in response to the worst public health crisis in living memory. Throughout they have been supported by our UNISON representatives who have risen superbly to the challenges of the pandemic. They have again confronted crises across all sectors by engaging in intensive collective bargaining, presenting solutions to service delivery problems, representing our members in trouble, engaging in continuous political campaigning and smart organising. As a result, we have a growing membership and an amazing determination to bring about social change by acting with one voice.

Activities that have secured our membership increase over the past year have included new pay campaigns in health, education and our demand for a real living wage across all sectors; and public policy campaigns such as our Free School Meals for All campaign and 'All We Need Is Lunch' Art Competition. Special recruitment and organising initiatives continue in strategic growth areas including in private homecare and nursing homes. The UNISON College NI Education Programme also remains a key recruitment tool through the development of innovative online education and training programmes, member engagement and support.

---

### Health and Social care

UNISON activists brought the One Team 2k campaign call for decent pay to MPs from all parties to seek their support for UNISON's claim, and to put pressure on the UK Government to release the funding needed by the NI Executive for a decent pay award. In September 2021, UNISON held a major demonstration at Stormont, seeking that all parties support a decent pay rise. However, the absence of funding from Westminster for decent pay awards in Northern Ireland represents a significant barrier to progress.

---

### Social Care

UNISON campaigned successfully for the creation of a Fair Work Forum to deal with longstanding issues of low pay and poor terms and conditions. This forum has held its initial meetings and securing commitments on the Real Living Wage, decent terms and conditions and trade union recognition across the sector will be our priority.

---

### Education

Members in Northern Ireland covered by NJC pay and terms and conditions roundly rejected the paltry pay uplift of 1.75%. We are continuing to call on Northern Ireland Ministers and the Department of Education to put in place a special recognition award and secure the funding needed for significant pay improvement through a pay and grading review. This will form a core demand in our campaigning around the NI Assembly election.

---

### Community and Voluntary

The UNISON demand for a recognition payment similar to that provided for health workers resulted in the Department for Communities offering a £500 COVID recognition payment for workers employed under the NIHE Supporting People Programme.

---

### Campaigns – Devolution

After over 1000 days without a devolved power-sharing government, the Stormont institutions returned in January 2020 under the 'New Decade, New Approach' agreement. There is no doubt that the incredible campaign of industrial action by our members across the entire health and social services system at the end of 2019 was a significant factor in getting Stormont back up and running.

However, the Executive has now once again collapsed in advance of Assembly elections due to take place in May 2022. This followed a period of two years where a Programme for Government was not agreed by the Executive and progress on major issues agreed to in 'New Decade, New Approach' stalled.

UNISON Northern Ireland will be embarking on a sustained campaign of political engagement throughout 2022 to seek

that devolved Government operates within a framework of equality and human rights and delivers the cross-cutting policies needed to improve the lives of our members, their families and their communities. This will include campaigning during the upcoming Assembly election and beyond.

---

## Campaigns – Education

UNISON Northern Ireland's 'Free School Meals for All' campaign continues to call for the real change needed to address growing levels of poverty and improve the health and educational outcomes of our children. Throughout 2021, our branches across Northern Ireland came together to support the campaign through resources and activity, including an extensive advertising campaign which ran at nearly 70 different locations across Northern Ireland and raised major public awareness of the campaign.

The hugely successful 'All We Need is Lunch' art competition had over 1800 entries and over 100 schools and youth organisations participating, with the winning artwork exhibited at the Golden Thread Gallery, Belfast.

A review of eligibility criteria for school meals is now underway, with the option of providing universal free school meals to all or certain year groups of pupils to be considered as part of that review. UNISON Northern Ireland is represented within this review process and will be pressing for all parties to support the call for universal free school meals during the Assembly election campaign.

The 'New Decade, New Approach' agreement between the NI political parties provided for the first process to implement a NI Bill of Rights in nearly 12 years. UNISON NDC has repeatedly supported our continued campaign on this issue to protect rights based in EU law in the future, and limit the power of Government to weaken those rights.

The Ad-Hoc Assembly Committee created under 'New Decade, New Approach' to make recommendations on a Bill of Rights has now completed its work, with 4 of the 5 Executive parties indicating support for the creation of a Bill of Rights. Our focus will now turn to ensuring that Westminster fulfils its responsibility to legislate for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, with no party being allowed to veto long-overdue progress in this area.

However, UNISON Northern Ireland is extremely concerned at UK Government proposals to weaken the Human Rights

Act. The incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into Northern Ireland law, including direct access to the courts and remedies for breaches, is a core provision of the Good Friday Agreement, and is currently provided for via the Human Rights Act.

In line with our longstanding position in support of the Good Friday Agreement, of which the protection of human rights is a central part, we have serious concerns that the proposed 'overhaul' of the Act will breach the commitments made within the GFA and could destabilise the wider peace settlement.

---

## Scotland

UNISON branches across Scotland have adapted to the radically changed circumstances in which we have been operating. We have expanded and developed our range of organising and campaigning techniques, and we have grown in number.

Like elsewhere, the majority of UNISON Scotland members have been working throughout the pandemic, very many of them either in, or in a very similar setting, to previously before the pandemic (like offices and depots). As a result, we made a real effort to maintain our presence in the workplace, with due regard to public health and safety measures.

However, we have had to adapt how we do things. Branches and networks have put more emphasis on organising and communicating through social media and inevitably, the 'Zoom call'.

Virtual rallies, webinars and symbolic demonstrations at workplaces, pictured and hash-tagged became core campaigning activities. This hasn't lacked challenges, but has illustrated innovation in organising. Our training programme for activists moved online and developed to meet the needs of the moment. COVID-related workplace safety inspection being just one example.

For some groups of members – and potential members, such as women working in social care, the shift to more online organising made participation easier.

It was a busy year on the pay bargaining front with significant campaigns in both Health and local government. An eye-catching campaign by our health branches in the

run up to the Scottish Parliament elections increased the offer from the Scottish Government into the realms of the acceptable. In local government the campaign was more drawn out, involving multiple ballots for action. It too succeeded in attaining a significantly better increase than was initially offered.

Much effort has gone in to delivering for social care workers, at a recruitment and organising level and at national bargaining level. UNISON Scotland is involved in a number of tripartite groups run by the Scottish Government which attempt to put in minimum terms and conditions for staff. Internally to ensure social care workers have an effective voice in our union, we have set up a social care sector committee with reps from across public, private and third sector care providers.

This is going to be essential as the Scottish Government progress their plans for what they call a national care service. The actual proposals are for a market driven, quango-based system with some ministerial oversight. This does have some potential gains – sector wide bargaining and better workforce planning for example. It would also though involve removing social work from local government to be run by a ministerially appointed boards, which is obviously unacceptable. The plans which will touch on the work of huge numbers of our members have been a focus in the last year and as the Scottish Government move towards legislation that is bound to continue.

And finally, Regional secretary, Mike Kirby, bowed out at the end of the year. He gave many years of service to UNISON, first as a lay activist at local and national level and then for the last decade, as Scottish secretary.

---

## Campaign Fund and Labour Link

Political fund membership of both the APF and CF at December 31<sup>st</sup> 2021 as a % of Full Members.

31st Dec 2021 Labour Link (APF) = 21.7%  
Campaign Fund (GPF) = 43.3%

### Totals by Gender are as follows: Full Members Only

31 Dec 2021	Labour Link	Campaign Fund
% Female/male	75.2%/24%	77.3%/21.9%

---

### Labour Link

Over the past year, Labour Link has developed and begun to implement a comprehensive plan of work, intended to increase the profile of UNISON Labour Link both internally and externally. This includes work on rebranding Labour Link, reframing the conversation with new members, making it easier for existing members to join the fund, refreshing the Labour Link presence on the UNISON website and working with other unions through TULO to share best practice.

The UNISON Group of Labour MPs has been re-established, with regular meetings with UNISON member Labour MPs. Regional Labour Link forums have been held successfully during COVID, ensuring that widespread engagement and democracy in Labour Link has continued through this difficult period. An online Labour Link forum was held in 2021, and an in-person forum is planned for 2022.

The 2021 and 2022 elections were a focus of both time and resource, ensuring that both UNISON members standing for the Labour Party and those areas identified regionally as priority areas for campaigning received appropriate support.

---

### Campaign Fund

The Campaign Fund approved more than 30 bids from across the union on 2021. This resulted in expenditure of £1.3m on a range of campaign and political activity including support for the No Going Back to Normal campaign, Show Racism the Red Card, Hope not hate, research into making public services carbon neutral, joint work with PSI exposing care home providers who offshore cash to tax havens.

Regions utilised the fund, including North West's continued engagement with Greater Manchester Citizens, work in the East Midlands to fight cuts at Nottingham City Council and continued work in Northern Ireland with the Committee on the Administration of Justice. The Campaign Fund

also continued to support the full range of the union's equalities work. Regional prides were greatly affected by the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, but bids received by the Committee in March 2022 indicate a return to business as usual in 2022.

---

## Key campaigns in health care

---

### Health and Care Bill

The Health and Care Bill is the first major piece of NHS legislation since the disastrous Health and Social Care Act of 2012 and seeks to put into law the main elements of the government's recent Integration and Innovation white paper.

There has been widespread consensus across the NHS for many years about the damage being done to the service by the 2012 Act and the Bill contains some important measures that UNISON has been championing for the past decade, though there are also less welcome elements.

As a result, UNISON has been supporting the Bill's measures to scrap the competition enforcement powers of health regulators, to get rid of the existing procurement system that insists on the use of competition, and to reinstate the government's ability to establish new NHS trusts, meaning that new integrated provider bodies can be established from within the public sector. But the union has also been campaigning for private companies to be excluded from the Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) that the Bill places on a statutory footing, as well as challenging other aspects of the Bill.

UNISON has worked with MPs and peers at every stage of the Bill's progress through Parliament so far, but has also worked closely with other unions and campaigners on joint initiatives. For example, UNISON was the first signatory on a joint letter coordinated by We Own It demanding that the government exclude private companies from ICSs in July 2021, and the union circulated briefing materials to UNISON branches from the Health Campaigns Together alliance later in 2021 which targeted the negative aspects of the Bill.

The campaigning of UNISON, politicians and campaigners has produced improvements. For instance, the government was forced to produce its own amendment to the Bill blocking those with links to private healthcare from taking

up roles on Integrated Care Boards (ICBs). Government ministers also placed in writing their commitment to add ICBs to the list of employers that can use the Agenda for Change pay system, in direct response to demands from UNISON that the Bill should do nothing to undermine national pay bargaining.

Once it moved to the Lords in 2022, the government suffered a series of important defeats on the Bill. At the time of writing in mid-March, the government had lost 10 votes during the first three days of the report stage of the Bill.

Most significantly, peers inserted a new requirement to oblige the government to publish assessments of future workforce figures every two years. UNISON was part of a coalition of 100 organisations pushing for this change as a way of improving staffing levels. Peers also rejected the government's regressive plans to change the cap on social care costs, another change UNISON has lobbied for. Further changes were made to block conflicts of interest on the new ICBs, to give a greater role to mental health experts, to ensure safe patient discharges from hospital, and to constrain the intervention powers of the secretary of state where service reconfigurations are taking place.

UNISON will continue campaigning to defend these amendments and to push for further improvements in the remaining stages of the Bill.

Separate to the parliamentary work, improvements sought by UNISON have also been made to the Provider Selection Regime that will replace the existing NHS procurement set-up. This more progressive system will now be extended to cover diagnostic services which had previously been excluded and will also cover some social care provision where this is considered an essential element of the healthcare being provided (for example, NHS continuing healthcare and some mental health services).

---

### Safe staffing

Unsafe staffing in the health service remains a major concern for healthcare workers and UNISON members. The NHS was dramatically short of staff even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the UK, compromising our member's ability to properly and safely care for their patients. One UNISON delegate at our 'Safe Staffing Forum' in March 2020 told us that 'I have days off when all I do is sleep, I'm sinking'; another spoke of the impact on her

colleagues and said, ‘they’re changing, they’re not the caring staff they were...because of the impact on them.’

COVID-19 demonstrated how far this situation had deteriorated. Crucial nurse staffing level requirements in intensive care were abandoned and students were begged to take paid roles to fill gaps. Increased workload was one of the top factors cited by the 49% of health members we surveyed whose mental health had deteriorated during the pandemic.

The UNISON health team has continued to expose unsafe staffing and call for action to fix the situation throughout the last year. Many health branches have struggled with campaign activities during COVID-19, as their members and activists have been asked to undertake clinical work, but volunteer branches are now working with the health team to build local campaigns to force their employers to improve staffing.

Branches from Cymru / Wales, England and Scotland are collaborating to run local surveys on staffing and to use the results to force their employer into action. This builds on our union’s strength in local organising backed by the resources and expertise of our health team. Results will be shared as the campaign progresses

---

### **Better Mental health campaign**

For the last two years we have extended our annual survey on mental health issues to cover all NHS workers. In October 2021, this year’s mental health survey was circulated in advance of World Mental Health Day and received over 10,000 responses. The findings were published through a press release in late December and garnered a lot of media attention, with interviews given by UNISON’s head of health and the deputy head of health. An infographic outlining key findings was produced and was made available to download as a resource on the dedicated mental health campaign page.

The survey findings – based on responses from more than 10,000 health employees in Wales, England and Northern Ireland – show half (51%) are covering more shifts because of staff shortages. More than two thirds (69%) of health staff say they’ve experienced burnout during the pandemic, and three in five (62%) feel overwhelmed after long, intense shifts.

Two-thirds (67%) of health employees responding to the survey say they’re concerned about the scale of the pandemic-related backlog and its impact on their workload. More than half (57%) regularly work beyond their contracted hours. One in five (21%) do so two or three times a week, and 14% put in extra hours on every shift.

A total of (57%) of health staff surveyed are thinking of quitting their jobs. Of these, 54% say they are actively looking to leave. The top reason given for wanting out is the negative impact work is having on employees’ mental health (67%). The feeling that their pay doesn’t reflect the jobs they do is cited by 59%, the lack of support from managers by 53%.

More than four in ten (46%) NHS staff say they feel guilty that those using health services are not getting the quality of care they need and deserve. Four in ten (40%) health workers have had to take time off work for mental health reasons during the pandemic. A quarter (26%) sought help through their employer, but four in ten (46%) didn’t feel they got the help they needed.

---

### **Violence Reduction in the NHS**

Violent assaults against NHS staff are rising with around 75,000 people each year experiencing physical violence & aggression from patients, relatives or public. Throughout the last year we continued to work through the NHS Social Partnership Forum violence reduction group to feed in issues our members have faced through the pandemic, including sexual harassment and increases in violence and aggression – particularly at vaccination centres. UNISON contributed to a Violence Prevention and Reduction standard which provides an agreed framework under which UNISON branches and UNISON health and safety reps have a role in partnership in making workplaces safer for staff and patients. In addition to this, UNISON has developed materials to support local branch campaigns aimed at highlighting the impact violence has on our members providing NHS services.

---

### **Race for Equality Campaign**

Challenging racism in the NHS remains a key priority for UNISON’s health service group, with work on the Race for Equality campaign continuing.



UNISON refreshed the existing suite of materials, including guidance on bullying and harassment, and recruitment and added new materials including a template survey and checklist. UNISON also held a webinar featuring two branches discussing the steps they've taken to fight racism and developed training sessions for activists with Show Racism the Red Card.

---

## Local Government campaigning

---

### Campaigning against local government cuts

Campaigning on local government funding and cuts has remained a key priority for the local government service group over the last year. The financial situation for local councils across the UK remained extremely perilous in 2021, especially with the ongoing financial impact of COVID-19. Extensive UNISON research carried out in the summer of 2021 showed that councils in England, Wales and Scotland faced a £5.8bn funding gap over the next two financial years. But UNISON engaged in a wide range of activities at branch, regional and national levels to campaign against cuts and for better funding for local government.

Our strategy has included research, innovative communications methods, raising awareness of our members' work in the public eye, training organisers and activists, lobbying governments and politicians, and the use of digital campaigning activities – all of it with member participation as the foundation. The ultimate aim has been to put pressure on the Government in Westminster to increase local government funding (and consequently the funding given to the devolved governments), while resisting cuts where they occur.

We have worked closely with UNISON Scotland and UNISON Cymru/Wales to support their work to put pressure on the devolved governments to direct more funding to local councils there.

Our council cuts website, based on freedom of information data, was updated in the summer of 2021, to show the individual funding shortfalls that all top tier councils across Scotland, Cymru/Wales and England projected for the financial year 2022/23. UNISON members and members of the public were able to click on the map to explore the realities of local government funding in their local area.

Three quarters of site visitors clicked through to use the 'Email your MP' action, leading to over 12 thousand emails being sent to members of parliament (MPs), members of the Scottish parliament (MSPs) and Senedd members calling for more funding for council services.

The service group released another powerful short film, 'Endgame', showing just what we risk losing unless more funding for councils is forthcoming. The video has received more than half a million views.

A key part of our efforts against local government cuts has been the local government finance training we have delivered, in partnership with LGIU and other partner bodies in the devolved nations. A new round of training for activists and organisers began in early 2022. It will help branches and regions scrutinise local authority finances and cuts proposals more effectively and is part of our long-term strategy to equip more people with the ability to understand and challenge local financial decisions.

Individual support has also been provided to local branches and organising staff, for example in Cornwall where, following the council announcing substantial job cuts, the service group organised a meeting with Labour's shadow front bench team in Westminster who consequently submitted numerous parliamentary questions to help support the branch's lobbying and campaigning efforts.

---

### Local Service Champions

UNISON has worked hard to promote the work of our members in local government, providing essential services, and always going the extra mile – and in the face of considerable risk due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021 we re-launched our popular Local Service Champions campaign, asking members and branches across the UK to nominate colleagues who were deserving of special recognition for the work they do. We were overwhelmed with fantastic nominations for the high-profile judging panel to consider, and we hope to announce the winner and runners-up at Local Government Conference.

To help make the champions work more externally focused than before, we also began a project collecting stories from the public about the great work carried out by local councils and the UNISON members they employ. These testimonies will be showcased in the media to promote the work our members do and try to secure more funding to help

safeguard our members' jobs. The stories will also be used to lobby MPs, MSPs and Senedd members as well as being promoted to the public via social media and traditional media routes.

Alongside these strands of work, in recent months we also worked with the public affairs firm Taylor Herring to help increase the profile of local government workers amongst the wider public, by developing our 'Everyday Heroes' campaign. This innovative campaign was due to be launched in the spring of 2022, featuring UNISON local government members from across the UK, including a school crossing patrol worker, a refuse worker, a care worker and a library worker, being transformed into action figure superheroes. We hope that this unusual and fresh approach will help our message resonate with people who are not normally within UNISON's sphere of influence, and lead to more pressure being put upon governments across the UK for more funding for council services.

---

## The future of local government

During 2021, the local government service group executive (SGE) and the NEC's policy development and campaign committee began to flesh out the development of a positive vision for the future of local government.

While the union understandably focuses a lot of its time and energy on more immediate campaigns – for more local government funding, against privatisation, for greater equality, and for better pay – we also need to develop a UNISON view on what local government should look like, covering issues like what local government should and shouldn't do, how it should be funded, what the extents of its powers should be, and the relationship between the various layers of government.

Initial work has established that there is a clear consensus on various areas and positions. We need to urgent changes to the unfair system of business rates and council tax; and central grant funding from Westminster to local authorities is still essential, especially when central government imposes new responsibilities on councils. Local democracy and accountability must be key elements of any vision for local government, and local communities should decide what level of powers any new combined authority should have. There is broad support for a simpler tier system, and broad opposition to metro mayors. And the role of local government be allowed to grow, to provide more and new

preventative services based on the needs of communities.

But there are some more complex issues around which further work is planned. What's the best form of taxation to fund local government? Should sources of funding be ringfenced for particular services, or should local authorities have free rein on how to spend their money? Should local authorities have tax-varying powers? And what should the union's position be on combined authorities?

This work will continue in 2022 and beyond, so that the union can develop a vision for local government which takes our campaign for more funding as its starting point but goes on to make clear how that funding should be raised and used, who should make decisions about local services, and how we can ensure a long-term future for the workforce.

---

## Education

---

### Education funding

After years of underfunding, schools and colleges began to see increased funding in recent years, but when set against increases in inflation, national insurance and energy costs, schools and colleges will continue to struggle financially. The campaign for better funding for the whole education sector has remained a key strategic priority for the union.

---

### COVID-19

For a second year COVID dominated our work in education. Government policies in the four nations did not vary hugely in content. However, moves from lockdown happened at a different pace, with England regularly loosening safety measures first, despite UNISON and other unions expressing concerns and challenging loose or late policy changes. Inevitably this allowed new variants to sweep through education establishments and meant measures sometimes had to be re-introduced – notably around the winter Omicron outbreak.

As COVID transmission routes became clearer our focus moved to retaining mitigation measures such as face coverings and improving ventilation in schools. We held a high-profile social media campaign day in December 2021, and following this, governments that had removed the

requirement to wear face coverings in schools re-introduced them. We also raised concerns about the impact of long-COVID campaigned against the removal of free testing.

Relationships and influence over governments varied. Stronger social partnerships in Cymru/Wales and Scotland meant that UNISON could put our views directly to Ministers and senior government officials. In England, following the disastrous COVID education policies and U-turns of 2020, UNISON was included in new Department for Education stakeholder groups.

---

## Schools

Organising in schools continued to be a top priority. In Scotland work included the production and distribution of three new organising packs, covering recruiting around registration, a revamped Cleaner Schools pack and a Time for Paperwork pack.

Regions and branches across the UK held a large number of events in November on 'Stars in Our Schools' day to celebrate the fantastic work that school support staff undertook to support pupils.

UNISON has continued to prioritise term time working, settling a number of claims and pursuing legal action in those authorities where we believed the offer was unacceptable to settle under payment claims. We secured around £60m in back pay settlements.

As part of our campaign to stop schools becoming academies, UNISON's regional, national, and legal teams secured an important strategic victory working with other unions against the catholic diocese of Sheffield and Hallam, which was trying to force all their schools to become academies. The secretary of state for education was forced to withdraw the academy orders.

UNISON ran high profile campaigns around school meals. In Northern Ireland we ran an "All we need is lunch" art competition for schools and a #freeschoolmealsorall campaign to ensure all pupils get a hot meal every day. UNISON Scotland was involved in the STUC's post-election Free School Meals Supporters meeting in the summer of 2021. In England, we wrote to 20 major contractors asking them to pay full statutory sick pay to staff and 'named and shamed' those who continued only paying SSP.

In Cymru/Wales, we secured improvements for support

staff, including a commitment from the education minister to addressing the four key areas of deployment, access to training & development, standardisation of roles, access to a new 'national professional learning entitlement' and a recommendation from the minister that all governing bodies assign the role of teaching assistant champion to one of their members.

We continued to campaign around special educational needs and disabilities provision, using our survey results to work with Labour to highlight the concerns of members supporting learners with special needs. We developed a section on the website on special/additional needs issues in the nations.

---

## Early Years

UNISON continued to campaign for better funding for all early years settings and the fair treatment of staff. We helped to organise a joint union rally in October 2021 to campaign for a long-term funding settlement for maintained nursery schools in England. Following the rally, the Government announced a three-year settlement that improved the funding of these nurseries but gave no guarantees of funding beyond this period. Many early years settings struggled with high COVID infection rates and had not been provided with the same level of support as schools: for example, having no access to testing and many staff bring denied full sick pay.

---

## Further Education

Joint union/employer work on risk assessments, face coverings and clinically extremely vulnerable staff continued to be well received by members. Work in 2021 focussed more on members' mental health. Following an initial survey, we produced mental health organising guidance and ran webinars. We signed up to the Department for Education's Wellbeing charter. In Cymru/Wales the Government has committed £50million for a joint mental wellbeing project with the employers and the joint trade unions. Scotland has a specific group focusing on health and safety in FE and have been running webinars to support safe education.

Colleges and sixth forms in England have seen the large falls in per-pupil funding over the past decade. Funding per student aged 16–18 fell by over 11% in real terms between 2010–11 and 2020–21 in FE and sixth-form colleges, and by over 25% in school sixth forms. Extra funding from the

Government only restored per pupil funding back to 2018-19 levels, due to an increase in pupils.

In Scotland FE colleges continued to face further real terms cuts, as the Government announced stand-still funding. This will mean a £23.9m cut due to inflation and an additional £28m removed because of the reduction in COVID-19 funding received previously.

The Welsh Government announced £65 million new funding to cover FE, HE and adult learning. However, this still falls well short of the amount of **money necessary**.

---

## Higher Education

UNISON's work in higher education over the past two years has been dominated by supporting our members and branches in working through the COVID-19 pandemic and a range of campaigns on pay, terms and conditions. During the lockdowns many university support staff had to continue to work on campus to support students, online teaching and research work. Equally, many university support staff had to work from home and UNISON sought to support staff wherever they were working.

UNISON continued to set out concerns to the shadow higher education minister and to meet with government officials to raise concerns about staff and student safety. UNISON has also continued to provide regular updates to branches on risk assessments and updated government advice from Westminster and the devolved governments, so branches are able to fully engage with employers on safeguarding health and safety.

HE pensions have been high on the agenda. UNISON consulted and balloted members in the USS against proposed changes to scheme benefits. Strike action is taking place at some HE branches. UNISON called for tiered contributions and support staff representation within scheme governance structures. Over the past two years, UNISON has run campaigns against outsourcing at the University of South Wales and Gloucestershire University and has taken strike action against detrimental changes to the pension at Dundee University. UNISON continues to campaign for in-sourcing at universities in London.

UNISON ran a series of webinars in November in 2020 and 2021 in lieu of the activist seminar that normally takes place. They were well attended and included tackling

racial harassment, pensions, running successful ballots, organising and recruiting online, COVID and health and safety, mental health, hybrid and flexible working. In addition, two online rallies were held, one attended by the general secretary, to coincide with the ballots for action on the 2020/21 pay freeze and to coincide with strike action against the 2021/22 pay offer. UNISON continued to deliver training on job evaluation schemes and moved these courses online. Training was delivered on both the HERA and Hay schemes to branch activists from across the UK.

---

## Careers

UNISON continued to build key sector links and ensure UNISON's careers members have a voice on the policy landscape, and early in 2022 we made a submission to the inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice, and Guidance. UNISON also worked with the University of Derby on the possibility of chartered status for careers advisors.

---

## Energy campaigning

---

### Energy Cost of Living Crisis

The work of the Energy SGE in 2021/22 has been overshadowed by the rapidly increasing wholesale gas price. This has led to the price of energy for consumers and businesses in the UK significantly increasing. The energy price cap which regulates the default tariffs went up by some 54% as set by the energy regulator OFGEM and is set to increase further in October. The increases reflect the near quadrupling of wholesale international gas prices and the UK's reliance on gas as its principal energy source both for heat and power generation.

The net impact of this will be significant increases in fuel poverty and income poverty from these extra costs. The limited action by the chancellor demonstrated a total failure to understand the nature of the problem or the most effective solutions. These remain investing in energy efficiency via a national program of door to door works to ensure UK homes are fit for purpose. UNISON have continued to press this policy response at every opportunity.

UNISON have long objected to the way the energy market operates in the UK. It is totally unacceptable that all losses

are mutualised across customers while gains however short term are kept in private hands. In the past year we have made further representations to Ofgem on changes we wish to see and continue to push for more radical reforms and a bigger role for the state in the form of wider public ownership as prescribed by UNISON in its ‘power to the people’ document.

We are also experiencing a further price shock to energy prices because of sanctions imposed on Russia as a result of its illegal invasion of Ukraine. Russia is a large exporter of natural gas into Europe and supplies LNG (liquified natural gas) to the UK for distribution into the gas grid. Disruption of these supplies has driven further increases in the wholesale price of Gas which will again impact on the price cap.

As a result of the invasion of Ukraine UNISON members working at the LNG terminal in Kent were unhappy with the prospect of unloading two ships carrying Russian LNG into the UK. As a result of their act of solidarity with workers in Ukraine the two ships were turned around and the gas not loaded into the UK. Agreements were reached with the employer to manage any further concerns and we have been pressing the UK Government to address loopholes in its guidance on Russian operations.

---

## Energy Policy

We continue to engage heavily with a range of stakeholders on the matters of energy policy, affordability, climate change and the impact on the energy sector of decarbonisation and the need for a just transition.

We have 3 key priorities:

1. a national programme of energy efficiency measures in domestic properties to ensure they reach EPC C rating, fully funded
2. public ownership of retail supply to support customers with the energy transition and reduce fuel poverty
3. progress the development of Hydrogen Gas to support the hydrogen economy and hydrogen heat in homes.

UNISON remains deeply concerned that at present, policies in place to support decarbonisation will significantly increase energy inequality in which poorer consumers face impossible decisions while rich consumers receive the benefits of available subsidies because they have upfront cash to invest. This will leave millions (many UNISON

members) adrift unable to afford to decarbonise and paying additional levies to support those who can. The right to clean energy is essential and decarbonisation must be affordable to all otherwise the chances of achieving our climate change goals will be lost forever.

---

## Water, Environment and Transport

The WET SGE has continued to work with employers post-pandemic to ensure safety standards are not compromised in the workplace. In addition, we commenced work to promote and raise awareness of the union ‘Be on the Safe Side Campaign (BOTSS)’. As a result of the work we’re doing around BOTSS, we have seen an increase in new reps coming forward to become workplace safety reps. At the time of writing, a bespoke webinar is being planned for safety reps in the Environment Agency. We held a successful branch seminar in October 2021 in Leicester – the first in-person event across the union.

Membership across WET sectors has been stable even though there have been leavers but at the same time joiners. New members joined online as branches could not conduct the traditional way of recruiting due to the pandemic. Branches are starting face-to-face recruitment activities now that restrictions have been lifted.

Pay awards for 2021/2022 in WET sectors:

- Water companies where they were an award this was below inflation with the highest being 3%
- Environment Agency was bound by the government public sector pay freeze and only those earning below £24k received a flat rate of £250, with the majority of our members receiving zero award. As a result of last year’s pay freeze in this employer, UNISON and other sister unions commenced a pay campaign for a fair and decent award for 2022/2023. This is ongoing and is backed by political engagement.
- On the other hand, transport employers just concluded as they mirrored the LG NJC award of 1.75%, this award will be paid in March 2022 and back dated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

In October 2021, we published an article into the government’s handling of waste water pollution by some water companies and called for the need to renationalise the water industry. We submitted a response to Ofwat PR24 consultation, calling for workers’ pay, terms and conditions to be protected.

---

## Private Contractors

UNISON has continued to work with and support our private contractor members who include hospital cleaners, school meal staff, admin officers and call centre workers. UNISON has been in active negotiations throughout the year with employers such as Capita, Compass, Interserve, ISS, Sodexo and Serco, as well as many smaller private employers. In Serco, UNISON negotiated a pay offer of 3% for all staff, plus a £100 non-consolidated bonus, annual leave of 25 days and sick pay from day 1 for all staff. UNISON reps also worked constructively with Sodexo when the threat of mandatory vaccination in health still loomed, securing redeployment opportunities for hesitant staff. Thankfully, a government U-turn removed the need for these measures.

In Veolia there has been a continuation of regular meetings between management and the UNISON convenor group. Veolia initially announced an intention to include COVID-19 sickness in their sickness management process, meaning any COVID-19 absence will be included in the triggers system from October 2021. The joint trade unions registered a failure to agree. The measures were delayed, and the joint unions continue to pursue this issue. Veolia have now conceded to demands to extend the date to 1 April 2022, when it will be reviewed.

In Liberata, members voted in favour (79%) of accepting the employers 2% pay offer for non NJC employees and the establishment of a project team to review the job evaluation pay bands, overlapping bands and pay progression during 2022. LAOS is providing rep training on digital recruitment and organising in this new COVID environment. In Capita and Compass UNISON has been active in supporting members on issues such as mandatory vaccination and pensions issues in Wales.

UNISON is also surveying all private contractor members to see what measures would improve engagement and communication with them.

The private contractors forum held a successful seminar in October 2021 in Croyde Bay, providing support, guidance and a networking opportunity to our private contractor reps. Arrangements for the 2022 Seminar are already underway.

## Chapter three

### Supporting our branches

The following chapter is divided in to two main sections. Firstly, the formal record of how the NEC has implemented Motion 72 on Branch Resources passed at the Special Delegate Conference 2021. Secondly, other measures taken to support branches outside of the branch resources review implementation.

---

#### Motion 72 implementation

The Branch Resources Review group sought to develop a package of measures that would improve resources to branches; recognising that after a decade-long austerity agenda attacking public services; members and branches were feeling the pressure. This package of measures came to eventually be known as motion 72.

In June 2021, UNISON's Special Delegate Conference (SDC) passed motion 72, "Supporting Our Branches". The motion as amended by national disabled members committee was linked to the national executive council (NEC) report to Conference from the Branch Resources Review.

In the summer of 2021, the presidential team created a lay implementation group (LIG) that would be responsible for working with relevant national and regional committees; along with full time officers to successfully embed the recommendations of motion 72 into the unions work; for the benefit of all branches across the UK.

The membership of the group was formally announced in September 2021 and the work of implementing motion 72 started in earnest shortly thereafter.

The following section summarises the programme of work that the lay group oversaw and directed. In addition to ensuring the successful implementation of the 14 motion 72 action points, the lay group also required that each project was screened for equality and devolution purposes.

---

#### 1a. Funding Formula

A new branch finance scheme with an improved funding formula is now in place. This scheme supports branches and recognises the financial and operational pressures that branches are facing in a constantly changing environment. The new formula was implemented on time and as scheduled, on January 1 2022, across all branches.

In addition to the new formula, the motion 72 funding scheme also contains provision for a new branch support and organising fund, funded at 2% of national subscription income. These new changes mean that branches will receive c£3.5 million a year more in terms of overall funding.

The new funding arrangement also recognises that not all branches are the same, and that they may sometimes

face different challenges. Therefore, as a protection for branches, and in order to allow for a smooth transition, particularly after the turbulence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the new arrangements ensure that a branch will not receive any less funding than they would have been entitled to under the old scheme. That protection is in place for the next three years. Upgrades to branch accounting systems are now in place, and these mean that branches will be able to see their funding % allocation for 2022 earlier than in previous years, this early sight can assist branches in managing their finances through better budgeting, planning and reporting.

---

## 1b. Branch Support and Organising Fund

The new Branch Support and Organising Fund (BSOF) launched in March 2022. This fund aims to kick start new projects led by branches and across regions. Conference set the fund at 2% of subscription income each year and for 2022 this will see £3.45m shared between twelve regions, dependent upon their membership size. Funds can carry over from year to year and the balance of regional pool accounts will be available after the NECs final accounts are confirmed. The regional pool had been 0.5% a year so this represents a significant new investment at a local level. Branches were encouraged to use their organising framework returns to indicate their early interest in applying to the fund. Bids can be received from individual branches, groups of branches and regional self-organised groups and young members. Decision making will be led by regional lay bodies set up or adapted for the purpose. Regional secretaries will decide how to resource the successful bids for regional staff. Bids are encouraged to promote growing the union through branch and collective organising and recruitment initiatives and campaigns; as well as developing long term sustainable organisational capacity. The NEC will provide support to regions and the fund along with a common set of guidelines to assess bids, pay them and evaluate them.

---

## 2. CaseWeb Subsidy

The implementation of the 50% CaseWeb subsidy for smaller branches (2000 members or less) has gone smoothly and the figures show an increase in the number of smaller branches seeking to take up CaseWeb. Before the subsidy came in, 53% of live branches had 2000 members or less, but, since the subsidy was implemented,

72% of branches that have expressed an interest in using CaseWeb, qualify for the subsidy.

Overall, of 242 branches either; now using CaseWeb, or waiting for the system, 138 (57%) qualify for the subsidy.

In general branches continue to give very positive feedback regarding CaseWeb:

***“We’re still finding our feet with it but we are really keen to roll it out to our reps now.”***

***“I feel like I’ve got my life back on track – CaseWeb is fab.”***

It is clear that with the subsidy in place, branches with 2000 members or less are much more likely to take up the system.

---

## 3. National Procurement Service

The union’s new procurement service to support branches in purchasing goods and services, has been approved and is expected to go live in 2022. Initial services are expected to include resources such as: toolkits, how to guides, best practice information, and preferred supplier arrangements. Once up and running, the aim is to provide access to UNISON national preferred supplier arrangements and framework agreements for a range of categories and commonly purchased items and services. These are expected to include: mobile phones, IT hardware, stationery, office consumables, multi-functional devices (MFDs) / printers and office furniture.

---

## 4. Online Meetings

To increase participation across all groups of UNISON membership and reduce the union’s carbon footprint in line with UNISON’s green policies, online and hybrid meetings will be promoted and facilitated. The NEC is also proposing rule book amendments to underpin the process.

Work has begun on designing standard guidance for national and regional bodies on principles such as:

- 1 A commitment to host a set minimum of meetings exclusively online per year
- 2 Some meetings – in particular some subcommittees and meetings of a short duration, to always be hosted online



- 3 A minimum attendance threshold for hybrid or in person meetings
- 4 Union wide access standards for meetings
- 5 Guidance for chairs and participants of online and hybrid meetings
- 6 Mitigations against the effect of ‘tech poverty’ on any union policy.

Subject to the outcomes of the proposed consultation, new guidance is anticipated to be in place as soon as practical.

---

## 5. Conference services

Booking services are being developed which will allow branches to book travel and accommodation for conference delegates online. Additionally, a reasonable adjustment funding pool is being created, the fund can be accessed and used to pay for all costs incurred on reasonable adjustments at UNISON conferences for disabled conference delegates. Further information will be available in future conference bulletins.

---

## 6. RMS upgrade

The union’s new membership system – MERLIN – is a modern, flexible, efficient system and over the last 12 months branches have contributed to and been integral in its development.

Branches have been invited to participate in surveys and attend video demonstrations. The surveys sought opinions on the system design, and online demonstrations have been enthusiastically received.

The survey received over 650 responses from all web access RMS (WARMS) users and over 700 WARMS users attended the online demonstrations.

The scope of the MERLIN project is far reaching and complex, with multiple dependencies. Not only is the union implementing a new membership system, it is also tasked with decommissioning the existing 20-year-old membership system by mid-2023. All of this must be done whilst ensuring system continuity for all other union applications such as CaseWeb and the online conference system, which are dependent on the union’s membership data.

Product demonstrations will be shown during National

Delegate Conference and MERLIN is planned to go live by the end of June 2022.

---

## 7. Branch services portal

UNISON’s online infrastructure is constantly evolving, with the digital offer to members and activists aiming to be more member centred. The branch services portal is a recognition that senior activists with major obligations in their branches and the wider union need information and resources delivered to them in a better way, as they are ‘time poor’. The portal is envisaged as a finely curated space, hosting information relevant to a specific group of UNISON’s most senior and busy branch-based activists.

An early example of what the **branch service portal** could look like was created and shared with activists in 2020, and currently hosts tools such as the organising framework, the health and safety review tool and the organising space.

The new look portal will be showcased at National Delegate Conference 2022

---

## 8. Bargaining support

The enhanced promotion of the bargaining support offer has begun and includes webinars and presentations to organising staff and activists across every region, alongside national committees and self-organised groups. Materials are also being promoted and distributed to activists at UNISON training courses. Activists may have also started to see more promotional activities online, in activist magazine, on social media, and on the UNISON website. Additionally, there will be greater use of sharing bargaining materials through the existing organising space and the new branch services portal.

---

## 9. Online branch expenses module

An exciting update to the online branch expenses system is now in development, and system tests involving a host of pilot branches were run throughout March and April. This new online offering enables members to claim expenses which have been authorised and approved by their branch. The module automatically shares information with OLBA, and as such, could save treasurers’ time in both data entry, and simplification of bank reconciliations. It can manage all

claims including any tracking and recording of receipts and authorisations. Branches are encouraged to sign up to the new system, with training help and support offered to both individuals and branch committees.

This expenses update will be available to all UNISON branches, on a voluntary basis soon.

---

## 10. Code of Good Branch Practice Update

The Code of Good Branch practice is a core UNISON document that has the backing of UNISON rule. Its purpose is to guide branches and branch officers on how they should meet the requirements placed upon them by UNISON's rules, and to give guidance and advice on the many practical, constitutional, organisational and procedural issues that confront branches. The following updates are intended to be made to the code:

- simplifying and shortening minimum AGM notice periods and branch election procedures from 12 to 8 weeks
- devising a refreshed set of model branch standing orders for on-line meetings
- encouragement of small branches of sharing resources.

Subject to NEC oversight, these updates are anticipated to be in place before autumn 2022 and in any event, no later than the start of the 2022/23 UNISON AGM season.

---

## 11. New facility time strategy

A national facility time strategy and campaign is now in development.

The strategy is centred around a brand-new facility time guide which amongst other things; seeks to raise awareness of the relationship between facility time and workplace organising. The guide also covers issues centred around equality of access to facility time which, if pursued, can enable the union to access the full breadth of talent amongst our diverse membership base. Additionally, the new guide dovetails with the union's reps training delivered locally by regional and branch education officers across the UK. The guide seeks to ensure that all activists have the time that they need, as part of their individual journey into activism, in all roles of an organising union.

The campaign will take a two-pronged approach and will

seek to share good news and best practice across the union and will feature UNISON activists that will act as facility time ambassadors and champions. The second strand of the campaign will be concerned with sharing facility time best practice to external audiences such as the TUC and other campaigning organisations.

---

## 12. Organising school

The lay implementation group has approved plans for a new style organising school. The school will focus on developing and building the skills of lay members to become skilled organisers. Participants will be expected to share their experience in supporting national and regional organising priorities and it is expected to launch in July 2022. The school will be a three-month programme arranged as a combination of in-person and online sessions spread over a quarter of a year, as a series of interconnected modules. Participation in the 2022 school will be aimed at key experienced activists from each region that can drive and influence the organising agenda across the region – activists that can be ambassadors for organising. Further information will be available from regional and branch education teams in late spring.

---

## 13. Affiliations

UNISON affiliates to many organisations, and the NEC policy development and campaigns committee (PDCC) and the international committee oversee and review these affiliations periodically, nothing is renewed automatically. A list of campaign groups that the NEC affiliates to, or financially supports has now been published and is available on the UNISON website at the following address: [www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2022/03/Affiliations.pdf](http://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2022/03/Affiliations.pdf)

Additionally, national service provider type affiliations (such as Labour Research Department and the Local Government Information Unit) will, in future, be promoted as branch and regional resources.

---

## 14. BRR implementation group

The last action of motion 72 required the establishment of a lay group, comprised of lay members from the NEC and Regions, to oversee implementation of the motion.

The presidential team created this group and the lay implementation group has met twice a month since October 2021; it has thoughtfully reviewed and tested the suggested project approach and delivery of the proceeding 13 proposals.

The group has successfully overseen the implementation of all of the motion 72 proposals. Some of these benefits are available for activists to access today, whilst others are in pilot or being refined, and so will become available through the course of 2022.

---

### Motion 72 Conclusion

The final action for the lay implementation group was to prepare this report to National Delegate Conference 2022 on the implementation of motion 72.

The following is a selection of national actions taken to support Branches outside of motion 72.

---

## Organising and Recruitment

In October 2021, UNISON initiated a new project to review the union's organising and recruitment strategy. It is some years since the union had an agreed national framework for this priority work and the new strategy will consider changes in public services employment, employer structures and government policy. The Organising and Recruitment Strategy Development Project (ORSDD) is working closely with the NEC's development and organisation committee to:

- encourage activism at all levels of the union in particular recruitment of stewards, safety representatives, union learning representatives and branch officers and will strive to ensure that they are representative of the membership and workforce
- build and maintain strong branch, regional and sectoral organisation to meet the 21st century organising challenge
- ensure that UNISON resources are deployed to grow power and influence for members both in sectors and workplaces where the union is recognised and in strategically expanding areas such as early years and social care.

---

### Organising Space

The organising space for branch activists (<https://organising.space.unison.org.uk>) continues to grow in both the numbers using it and the topics for discussion. The space is a password protected secure on-line area that enables activists to ask questions and seek help and tips from staff and other activists. New sections added have been on bargaining advice, Black members and branch international officers.

---

### Mobile Organising Unit

The strategic organising unit (SOU) continue to offer support and the van to branches in dispute across the UK. The mobile unit instantly increases our visibility in a workplace, with a public address system and office with WiFi, it provides a new flexible organising approach. The mobile unit was particularly prominent when visiting our members working in Barchester Care Homes in South Wales. Where workplace access was not permitted the mobile unit provided members with a place to have organising conversations with branch activists.

---

### Phone Banking

A key new organising tool introduced at scale during the pandemic was large scale, secure and structured phone banking using the member contact tool (MCT). Over 150 different phone bank campaigns with over 200,000 members being contacted have run since the pandemic ranging from welcome calls to new joiners, checking in with social care workers around PPE provision, encouraging members to participate in AGMs and ballots or identifying and supporting new activists.

---

### QR Codes

Another new tool which has seen increased usage of QR codes to link to join online (available at the branch services portal) or other websites.

---

### DOCAS joining online

DOCAS as a payment method for online joiners continues to be rolled out successfully with over 300 employers

across the union now enabled with more and more coming on board every day.

---

## Organising Framework

The annual organising framework continues to be a key partnership working tool to help branches and regions develop organising initiatives and campaigns. The digital tool facilitated this occurring throughout the pandemic and has been key to understanding potential demand for the new branch support and organising fund (BSOF).

---

## Activist Data Cleanse

An activist RMS data cleanse exercise is taking place to enable the union to better assess its activist base moving forward.

---

## Bargaining Support

Over the last year, the bargaining support unit has developed cross-service group guidance that seeks to provide negotiators and branches with concise practical advice on all key aspects of staff terms and conditions.

The guides are continually being remodelled to highlight the best terms achieved across the union as a reference point for negotiations, as well as offering model letters, surveys and agreements or policies as ready-to-hand templates in conducting negotiations.

Bargaining support's most regular update is the pay claims guidance that is designed to be of particular assistance for negotiating on behalf of staff who stand outside of the major nationally determined claims.

However, a continual stream of new and revised guidance over the past year has been made available to negotiators, with particular emphasis over the last year on dealing with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the workplace.

The main topics covered have been as follows:

- Bargaining on working from home and hybrid working
- Bargaining over workplace issues during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Bargaining to support those who had previously been shielding
- Bargaining to support those with long COVID or post-

COVID-19 syndrome

- Bargaining over vaccination status requirements
- Securing and defending facility time for union reps
- Securing recognition and achieving the best terms
- Bargaining over workplace reorganisation
- Bargaining over collective redundancy
- Bargaining guide to the National Minimum Wage
- Bargaining for the Living Wage
- Bargaining on working hours
- Bargaining for working parents
- Bargaining on carers' policies
- Bargaining guide to whistleblowing
- Bargaining guide to the Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS).

In addition to its publication of general guides, bargaining support continually responds to enquiries from branches and officers.

Bargaining support's other major areas of work over the year have included the development of UNISON's evidence to the Low Pay Commission on the national minimum wage rates, maintaining the bargaining agreements library and promoting our services across the union.

---

## Financial Support

2020 and 2021 were difficult years for branches at operational and administrative levels due to the pandemic. Finance colleagues had previously surveyed all branches and over 200 branches came forward to say they required support and assistance from the finance function at UNISON Centre on their 2021 accounts and/or audit.

The team in finance had already anticipated this and had established a series of work arounds to ensure that all branches received the support needed. These included setting up alerts on OLBA to monitor progress; establishing a scanning functionality to enable the sharing, submission and storage of documents; setting up a safe and secure PO mailbox as a backup facility to ensure branches can get their accounts and files to finance safely. The result was that most branches were able to conclude their accounts despite the hurdles.

At the same time, colleagues worked hard to ensure that branches eligible for branch financial support under motion 126 (passed in 2019) were not disadvantaged by the disruption brought about by the pandemic. In order to avoid delays to making the payments to branches, interim

processes were put in place and communicated to all branch treasurers and branch secretaries to ensure to ensure that branches received their support entitlements by the due date. This allowed the branch to continue to plan ahead financially but with accurate funding information and without the need revise entitlements. Branches were also able to contact a dedicated helpline to ask any questions or raise any issues they may have about their branch funding or support entitlements.

---

### **Participation Project**

Women and particularly, low paid women are not well represented in UNISON's democratic structures despite a rule book commitment to proportionality. Understanding what would encourage more women to become active in their union is important if UNISON is to enable better participation and make women's involvement a realistic opportunity.

UNISON has launched a project to increase the participation of low-paid women members in care homes, schools, and other smaller workplaces. A workshop was held last October, and now similar events are being rolled out across regions.

A parallel leadership project empowering Black members to become activists is being developed alongside the women's project.

## Chapter four

### Supporting our members

Most of our members list, “support when I need it at work” as the main reason they join a union. This has been taken to a new level throughout COVID-19 as safety at work becomes a major concern for many. Furthermore, with the cost-of-living crisis hitting our lowest-paid members the hardest, the ability of members to find support from the union when they need it, whether from a knowledgeable local rep or a legal expert, is more important than ever.

This section deals with many of the key ways the national union supports members, from advice and guidance to learning and development or from welfare help to legal representation.

---

#### Member Engagement Programme

The Member Engagement Programme (MEP) is an exciting re-design of the way in which the union engages with members, based on the latest technology, better integration of systems and conceived with member needs at the heart of its delivery.

There will be improved digital capability and investment over the next two years to improve services and communications at all levels and avoid duplication. Members will be able to find what they want quickly, receive information relevant to their job and role in the union and it will help build the union’s collective capabilities from campaigns to organising.

The new membership system, known as Merlin, will be key to the delivery of the programme with integrated member service and digital engagement systems updated and built to be compatible with it.

The priority is to ensure members have the best experience of their involvement and interaction with the union and for their feedback to drive change and improvement in the union’s services.

At the end of the programme, the union will be able to measure and improve on membership levels, satisfaction, participation in democratic processes, retention, campaign engagement and activist engagement.

Easy, effective and efficient communication between members, lay activists and staff is the foundation which will help the union achieve its other objectives as set out in this report.

---

#### UNISON College

This year sees the launch of the next iteration of UNISON learning - the UNISON College. One of the general secretary’s key manifesto pledges, the UNISON College will transform the existing activist training programme and member learning offer, drawing the disparate strands together into one coherent whole.

Members will see expanded opportunities for professional development, personal fulfilment, and improving the everyday skills they need to progress in their careers. For activists, the UNISON College will build on our existing, comprehensive U-Train programme to ensure that they remain confident and fulfilled in their roles.

Organising schools, advanced law courses, and other training will allow activists to reach their full potential. For the first time, UNISON members will have access to a specialist advisory service that can help them explore the learning opportunities that are open to them and make an informed decision.

In the words of the general secretary: “The UNISON College will not only build on the great work that is already going on across every region in the UK but also offer new learning opportunities and new ways of learning with an ambitious target of trebling learning opportunities for members and activists.

“The UNISON College will be an integral part of UNISON, built on UNISON values, helping to build organisation, membership, and activists. It will provide new and expanded learning opportunities for all UNISON members, bringing together learning of all kinds and offering every member the chance to get on in their personal lives, in the union and at work.”

This will also bring a greater focus on the vital role of the UNISON learning rep (ULR) and part of establishing the College will be an initiative to recruit and train thousands more ULRs, ensuring that learning is fully integrated into the union’s organising strategy.

---

## Member learning

Throughout 2021, UNISON Learning and Organising Services worked with regional education teams to expand the member learning offer substantially. We converted many popular courses and workshops for online delivery while also working with new and existing providers to introduce new opportunities.

These included the *Caring for Adults* and *Attachment in the Early Years* workshops from The Open University, *Bereavement By Suicide* from Cruse, and *Getting Started in Microsoft Excel* and *Making Progress in Microsoft Excel*. 3,706 members attended learning workshops or courses of more than 90 minutes in 2021, a thousand more than in 2020.

We continued to see good uptake of self-guided online learning opportunities from the Skills Academy, 2,850 members signed up for an account and, between them, completed 4,122 courses during 2021, these courses are

CPD or certificated. Popular courses included: *Admin, PA and Secretarial Certification*, *Coronavirus Awareness Certification*, and *Mental Wellbeing in Children and Young People Certification*.

Regional and branch education teams continued to deliver learning opportunities addressing specific needs of members. These included trans-inclusion training in Cymru/Wales, mental health awareness training in Scotland, and domestic abuse awareness in the North West.

Additionally, a host of webinars, short interactive workshops, and other bite-sized member learning opportunities reached many thousands of members. Highlights included *Financial Wellbeing for UNISON members*, delivered by The Money Charity as part of joint work between UNISON Learning and Organising Services and UNISON Welfare (There for You), a series of health and wellbeing webinars in the South East, and lunch and learn sessions on neurodiversity in the South West.

140 members were awarded learning grants in 2021; 104 of these were to support study with The Open University.

The UNISON Learning website (<https://learning.unison.org.uk>) has been substantially restructured and updated to make it more intuitive and easier to navigate for members, reps, and activists who support learning.

---

## Union Learning Fund

We were extremely disappointed in the Government’s decision to cease union learning funding in England from March 2021. However, the hard work of UNISON learning activists and staff has filled the gap which was left. Funded activity continues in Scotland and Cymru/Wales, and this has been incorporated into the report on member learning.

---

## Activist training

In 2021, UNISON learning and organising services and regional education teams built on the work of 2020 to be able to offer the full range of activist training. While a small number of courses were delivered in the classroom in the autumn of 2021, the emergence of the Omicron COVID-19 variant meant that training returned to online delivery by the end of the year.

However, delivering courses online meant that they have been accessible to more learners who were previously excluded by geographical difficulties, and that courses which would normally be difficult to recruit to, due to their very specialised nature, have been able to run.

As a result, many more courses than previously have been organised nationally by UNISON learning and organising services and later taken up by regional education teams. A hybrid programme is in place across the union for 2022.

The success of the coordinated approach of the *Be on the safe side* campaign continues to be obvious. In 2021, 598 health and safety reps were trained, compared to 479 in 2020 and 431 in 2019. Not only has the number of health and safety reps trained risen year on year despite the pandemic, but the proportion of women health and safety reps has risen within that, from 48% before the pandemic to 54% by the end of 2021.

Other core training is recovering more slowly. While training figures for workplace reps and union learning reps (ULRs) are up on 2020, they have yet to reach pre-pandemic levels. In 2021, 1317 workplace reps were trained, compared to 891 in 2020 and 1910 in 2019. While 84 ULRs were trained – twice as many as in 2020, but less than 2019’s 102.

We have also introduced new courses for activists, including the *Show Racism The Red Card: Ambassadors programme*, *Mental Health First Aiders*, *Poetry for Change*, and advanced discrimination law courses, as well as continuing to deliver our existing follow-on and advanced activist training. A suite of five workshops on digital organising, with supporting material on the e-learning site, was created to be delivered separately or as a series.

Following advice from the Information Commissioner’s Office, completion of the *Data Protection and the GDPR* e-note is now mandatory for all UNISON activists. So far 2800 learners have completed this module, which can be found at <https://e-learning.unison.org.uk>.

It has also been incorporated into the course materials for training for all core roles.

We have developed new e-notes introducing the concept of mapping (*Map My Workplace*) and UNISON’s structures (*U in UNISON*). These have been designed to work as part of longer, blended activist courses as well as being self-contained, standalone modules. We have also refreshed

the existing *Are you thinking of becoming a ULR* and *First Steps as a UNISON Steward* modules.

Totals for Activist training for 2021	Reps attending
New Stewards	1,397
Health and Safety	651
ULR	96
ERA Refresher	842
Follow on to intro courses	377
Other and advanced	3,150

### There for You

UNISON’s own charity, There for You supports UNISON members and their families in times of unexpected financial hardship.

2021 was a year like no other as COVID-19 continued to affect people’s lives. Rising living costs meant that many members were forced to consider changes in their spending, cutting back wherever they could while others had to rely on increased borrowing just to make ends meet. And, while the temporary uplift in universal credit provided some support to those on low income, many in receipt of this benefit found themselves struggling to pay for their most basic needs.

During 2021, we spent £1,251,018 helping members, providing financial help to those who needed it most. By far our greatest achievement was the amount of help given to those hardest hit by the pandemic through the COVID hardship fund. However, none of this would have been possible without the additional financial support from UNISON, and the generosity of branches, and regions.

Overall, grant expenditure increased by 27% compared to the previous, record-breaking year.



Below is a breakdown of total grant expenditure in 2021:

Grant category	£
Emergency payments	8,560
Weekly grant – living costs	127,750
Clothing grants	6,000
Household maintenance	32,615
Household appliances & furniture	63,219
Disability equipment, health related costs	2,026
Wellbeing breaks	1,860
Funeral expenses	27,720
Bankruptcy/DRO fees	8,025
Housing costs	17,900
Priority debt payments	49,782
Fuel & water costs	16,600
Hospital travel costs	4,404
Car repairs	5,022
Small grants programme – winter fuel	36,080
Small grants programme – school uniform	49,950
Exceptional	199
Subtotal	457,710
COVID hardship fund expenditure	
Winter fuel grant	206,080
Living costs	332,650
Loss of employment	80,500
Housing costs	126,833
Removal of universal credit/tax credit uplift	44,395
Other	2,850
Subtotal	793,308
GRAND TOTAL	£1,251,018

Feedback from members:

***“I just wanted to say a massive thank you to you and your team for this grant. This has lifted an amazing amount of financial and psychological stress of struggling to pay our bills during this pandemic despite being hard working people. We will use this money to clear some of our arrears on the rent and council tax. Thank you again.”***

***“Thank you so much for the great news you have just given! We have been living on a knife edge for a while now and the grant will give us a bit more of a cushion whilst we fight our way back out of the financial problems we have had recently.”***

***“Thank you so much, this grant will make an enormous difference for my son and myself. This month would have been particularly difficult as I have now used all the credit on my credit cards and was panicking about how I could make my wage last until next month and put food on the table.”***

### Professional Services Unit

UNISON's professional services unit (PSU) represents members who are reported to their professional regulator. Of UNISON's current membership, 40% are required to maintain their professional registration as a condition of their employment. This is a growing area and, as more occupations professionalise, this, coupled with the changing shape and landscape of regulation, will also see it further expand.

We currently cover the 10 UK-wide regulators. As regulation is a devolved power in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales/Cymru we also provide representation in fitness to practise investigations in a number of the devolved organisations as well.

The total number of live cases open in PSU at 31 December was 909.

England	473
Northern Ireland	28
Scotland	355
Wales/Cymru	53

The table below (table 1) also represents live cases as of that date. Social worker cases are reported slightly differently as Social Work England was created on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019 and there are remaining legacy cases handed over to them in the transfer from the Healthcare Professions Council.

**Table 1**

	NMC (352 live cases)	HCPC (177 live cases)	SWE/ devolved equivalent (164 live SW cases) 68 received in 2021	SSSC (255 live cases)
England	224	149	47	
Northern Ireland	26	2	0	
Scotland	83	17	4	255
Wales/Cymru	19	9	1	
	Of this figure nurses make up 272 cases	Of this figure Paramedics make up 66 cases and OT make up 37	All Social Workers	Range of care worker and managerial roles regulated by SSSC

Table 2 reflects case numbers over proceeding years to evidence growth in case numbers

**Table 2**

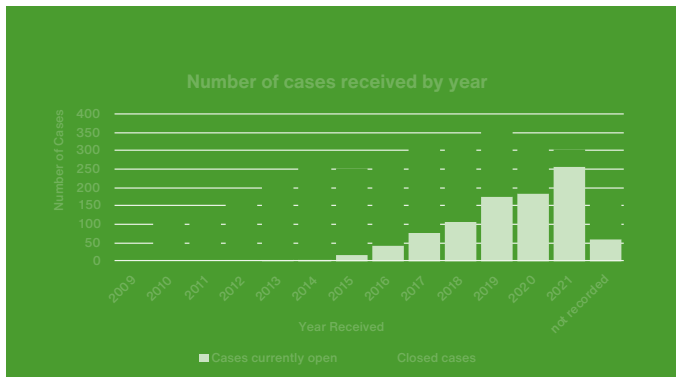


Table 3 shows case numbers by regional referral – please note PSU only took over responsibility for FTP cases from Northern Ireland in 2019, prior to this regional organisers undertook them.

**Table 3**

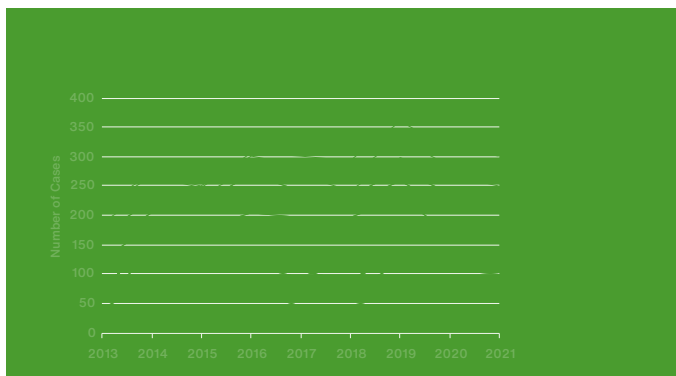


Table 4 represents case numbers by regulators

**Table 4**



Table 5 shows cases by common outcomes, we have only included figures where each regulator has the same power. The NMC has additional powers which enable cases to be closed at an earlier stage if the member accepts undertakings. Other organisations do not have that power.

**Table 5**

Outcome	2019	2020	2021
No case to answer	67	17	58
CoP Order	13	0	0
Caution/Warning/Reprimand	2	2	5
Suspension	3	1	1
Struck Off	2	2	0
Voluntary Removal	3	0	1
Member deceased	1	0	3
Restored to register	1	0	2
Sanctions revoked	1	0	0

You will see from the data that the unit has become increasingly busy year on year as more cases are referred to it. A report was previously commissioned and is with UNISON's staffing committee pending an outcome.

---

## Using the Law to fight for our members

2021 has been another significant year for UNISON's in-house legal team, with victories in the highest courts of the land which challenge the principles and laws that dictate the lives of workers across the country. This is on top of wins in hundreds of smaller cases in which we represent the union's members and families with their individual problems.

While 'normal' life has easily been forgotten for many during nearly two years of pandemic, the small team has remained vigilant and determined in the knowledge that the rights of workers are always under threat.

Here are just some of the achievements in the past 12 months.

---

### Public Sector exit cap

The legal team kicked off the year with a decisive blow to the Westminster Government, forcing it into abandoning its Exit Cap regulations, which had only been introduced the previous November.

The regulations were designed to cut big pay outs to the highest paid public servants when they were made redundant, setting a 'cap' of £95,000. However, in practice, moderately paid staff could also be caught up by the law. In particular, it would have affected those in the local government pension scheme (LGPS) who were made redundant over the age of 55.

UNISON and other unions made a legal challenge. But before that was due to be heard – and just as we were finalising our evidence – the government backed down, disapplying the regulations, with a view to revoking them completely because of the 'unintended consequences'.

---

### NHS holiday pay

In March, after a long campaign of legal challenges

and behind the scenes negotiation, UNISON won back payments totalling at least £124m for its health members over miscalculated holiday pay. NHS employers had been failing to take account of regular overtime when making holiday pay calculations, which had been leaving many members underpaid for years.

It was a mistake rather than a deliberate oversight, but one which UNISON identified and addressed. The issue was initially explored with ambulance branches, whose members frequently work overtime, and the team initiated the claim *East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust v Flowers* and others. The case culminated in the employer appealing a decision to the Supreme Court.

The claim spawned any other claims across the country and the cost implications and the significance of our members succeeding at the Supreme Court incentivised NHS employers to come to the negotiating table and six years of legal pressure had provided hundreds of tribunal claims as leverage in the national talks.

The talks resulted in a framework agreement which acknowledged that employers should include regularly worked overtime and additional standard hours (for part-time staff) in the calculation of pay when staff are on annual leave. Since then, trusts have been busily correcting underpayments for two full financial years, 2019-21.

The case was a good example of UNISON identifying a problem, then using the law, using organising, and using members' stories to get money into people's pockets.

---

### Defending the rights of strikers

In June, UNISON's achievement in bringing UK law into line with Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights marked an important step in recognising an individual worker's right to strike.

UK law had previously prevented employers from sacking staff involved in strike action or other union-organised workplace disputes, but not from disciplining them or otherwise making their lives difficult. UNISON decided to remedy this loophole.

By representing care worker Fiona Mercer against the North West based charity Alternative Futures Group (AFG). Ms Mercer had been involved in organising UNISON's long-

running dispute over AFG's plans to cut payment for sleep-in shifts undertaken by its care staff. As a result, she was suspended, prevented from going into work by her employer and disciplined. AFG's heavy-handed tactics also deterred some workers from taking part in the strike action.

Although losing at tribunal, the union supported Ms Mercer's win at the employment appeal tribunal (EAT) in March. The EAT president said that UK law was not in compliance with international law, and therefore added wording to the Trade Union Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 to the effect that striking workers are now protected.

UNISON's in-house legal team continue to argue Ms Mercer's case at the Court of Appeal in January 2022, after the employer appealed again arguing that Article 11 relates to freedom of assembly and association, which is an integral part of what it means to be a trade unionist.

Mercer is the first case of its kind, **and it creates a legal right to protect workers in industrial action that never existed before.**

---

## Defending access to justice

This year also saw UNISON defending access to justice for its members, by holding back the government's attempts to change what is called the small claims limit. If a claim is for a sum below that limit, the claimant will not receive legal costs, even if successful, making it very difficult for them to get legal representation.

The limit had been £1,000 for more than 20 years and to increase it would, in effect, deter normal working people from claiming for their personal injury. The government has been attempting to do exactly that for a decade.

This year it did raise that figure, to a massive £5,000 for road traffic accidents. But UNISON's campaigning – working alongside the Law Society, other unions, and even insurers – prevented the same from happening to workplace injury claims, where the limit will now only increase to £1,500, and not until April 2022.

We managed to delay the implementation, then managed to reduce it. But this is an ongoing and significant fight to keep access to justice as open as possible. It's one that UNISON Legal Services is vigilant about and constantly battling with government about, because they never go away.

---

## Multiple claims affecting school support staff

A successful case's effects aren't always restricted to the individuals involved. In 2018 UNISON took on tribunal claims for nearly 500 school staff with Greenwich Council, the majority of whom were women, arguing that their holiday pay was being calculated incorrectly because of their part-time status. The council agreed to revise the formula used to calculate the holiday allowance, backdating the correct pay five years, arriving at a settlement worth £5m.

The case in Greenwich highlighted a particular flaw that was likely to happen in many local authority employers' calculations around the country. Furthermore, private employers like academy chains tend to follow local authority calculations for holiday pay.

There are a quarter of a million UNISON members employed in education with a large number potentially affected by the issue. In the past three years, UNISON Legal Services has worked with the Local Government team to identify more problem areas, with UNISON's in-house legal team overseeing thousands of claims.

So far, through lodging cases and negotiating with regional colleagues, UNISON has concluded settlements totalling £55m for low-paid largely female employees.

---

## Term-time holiday

Following a hearing in December 2021, we also await the Supreme Court's judgment in a case appealed by the Harpur Trust against music teacher, Mrs Brazel. UNISON have previously intervened and successfully led the arguments in the Court of Appeal that all workers are entitled to a minimum of 5.6 weeks of annual leave under statute, with no pro-rata reduction for term time (part-year workers). This judgment affects all workers but will have the largest impact on term-time and zero-hours workers.

---

## Forced academisation

UNISON's in-house legal team worked with the local government and regional teams as well as legal teams from other unions to stop the forced academisation of voluntary aided schools in Yorkshire and the North Midlands.

After we threatened legal action on the basis that such

action was unlawful, the Secretary of State for Education agreed to withdraw academy orders that were sent to schools in the Catholic Diocese of Hallam.

---

## Legal Advice and Representation

UNISON is running employment tribunal claims on behalf of 5,300 members – this includes individual and group claims. The greatest number of cases are run for unfair dismissal.

Between February 2021 and February 2022 Thompsons concluded 364 matters for UNISON members. Two thirds, (239) resulted in a settlement and recovery of nearly £9.5m for members including over £550,000 for unfair dismissal, almost £500,000 for disability discrimination and over a £250,000 for race discrimination.

The total settlement compensation figure includes over £7.5m of compensation recovered over a number of years as part of UNISON's equal pay strategy of negotiating equality proof pay and grading structures and recovering compensation for historic discrimination.

In the same period, Thompsons advised on 131 discrimination matters for UNISON members across a wide range of protected characteristics including disability (51), race (35), and sex (11) sexual orientation (5), and part time workers (3). Of these, 100 were successfully concluded in settlements, recovering almost £1m, while 5 won at hearing recovering over £100,000 (£116,928) more.

In addition, the legal scheme extends to criminal law matters and, in 2021, UNISON assisted 510 members under our criminal law advice and assistance scheme. This supports UNISON members who are in the harrowing position of defending work-related criminal allegations.

Finally, other parts of our legal scheme are also of great value to our membership. Last year alone, we helped over 5,000 (5188) members through our free initial legal advice scheme which deals with non-work-related issues.

We also assisted over 1,300 (1022 – wills, 270 conveyancing) members under our wills and conveyancing service, offering free standard wills to our members and discounted more complex wills and probate services as well as discounted conveyancing services to our members and their families.

Aside from the comprehensive assistance members are given with employment law issues, one other big benefit of our scheme is the UNISON personal injury legal scheme which comprises of personal injury advice, following an accident or injury at work, from our external legal services provider.

This covers cases such as assaults at work, manual handling and needlestick cases, slipping and tripping and falling cases, and road traffic accidents. Furthermore, it covers injuries arising from industrial diseases such as work-related stress and bullying cases, asbestos cases and work-related upper limb disorder claims.

The personal injury service also extends to members and their families for non-work-related accidents – such as road traffic accidents and slipping and tripping injuries. In 2021, we supported around just under 4000 (3929) members and their family members within this part of the legal scheme.

During this period, we also successfully concluded thousands of these personal injury cases, ensuring our members and their family members received the compensation they deserved. Last year this amounted to just under £30m (£29,643,297) of compensation.

---

### JCWI Immigration help line

One membership service that has been growing in importance is our immigration advice line provided through the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI). Members can access the service by contacting UNISONdirect and it is available for all members whether they have British, EU or non-EU nationality. Regional seminars, in for example Eastern Region, have been raising the profile of the helpline. The Windrush scandal was just one high profile example of why the service is needed.

---

### Industrial Action Ballot Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic meant that UNISON members, who are often on the frontline of health, emergency and care services, took less industrial action than in recent years. However, UNISON has been at the forefront of targeted action where employers have sought to withdraw employment rights by outsourcing jobs or using appalling fire and rehire tactics.

Across 2021 well over half a million UNISON members were balloted for industrial action. This included members across local government in England and Wales on NJC contracts, members in local government in Scotland and HE members across the country on pay and pensions, as well as many smaller local disputes across local government, NHS outsourced providers, academy schools and care providers.

Because of the anti-trade union laws put in place by this Westminster Government, reaching 50 per cent turnout in large, aggregated ballots remains an ongoing barrier to UNISON members taking industrial action across a sector.

While turning out members in smaller ballots at individual workplace remains achievable, turnout in sector-wide action such as the NJC ballot in local government remains a challenge. Indeed, 70% of those members who did vote in the NJC campaign voted for action, but because the threshold was not met action is not possible.

UNISON's NEC and service group committees discussed these issues throughout this year, and the service group liaison committee will work alongside the industrial action committee to identify cross-over issues that can be taken forward to help boost turnout in future campaigns.

---

### **NEC raising Strike pay daily rate and IA procedures review**

At the end of last year, the industrial action committee met and agreed both to undertake a review of industrial action procedures, and that the rate of strike pay set out in the industrial action handbook should be increased from £25 to £50 per day in line with rising cost-of-living facing many members.

After agreement by the finance committee and full NEC this was implemented immediately, ensuring that members striking across higher education, Glasgow City council, Sandwell Leisure and other disputes are fully supported by the union.

A working group of NEC members has been set up to look at UNISON's industrial procedures, in line with the Trade Union Act, to see what improvements can be made to the handbook and to ensure that members and branches are supported. In particular, it is looking at whether the consultation and balloting process can be streamlined to ensure that our activists can respond to events at speed.

---

### **UNISONdirect**

The union's contact centre, UNISONdirect, is on the frontline in supporting our members. It is often the first point of contact for members and deals with hundreds of thousands of contacts by telephone, email, webchat and online every year. This means our members know they can reach the union, even if they don't know their branch details or if it is outside of normal working hours.

As with every sector of UNISON, the initial lockdown in March 2020 and the subsequent lockdowns have been challenging. UNISONdirect have had to be flexible and innovative in finding new ways of helping members.

Initially, UNISONdirect did not have access to a phone system for agents working from home. However, we quickly moved our service online meaning members could contact us via online contact forms on the UNISON website, MyUNISON, webchat or email. In total, when the pandemic struck there were only five hours that members were not able to interact with UNISONdirect, outside of our normal hours.

During the last 24 months UNISONdirect has seen an acceleration in the change in the way that members contact us, with a decrease in phone calls but increasing numbers of members contacting via the online options.

In 2021 UNISONdirect dealt with 315,004 contacts from members. The busiest month for phone calls was September, when UNISONdirect agents handled 20,628 calls in a single month. In January 2021 we handled 15,265 online queries while 4,111 members spoke to an agent via a webchat.

As before, UNISONdirect remains a key channel for people joining the union – with the option, now, of being able to discuss joining or questions about the application, in real time with an agent via webchat, while completing the form online.

UNISONdirect also continues to be pro-active in contacting members. In 2021 agents made over 600 calls to members of an employer who was withdrawing DOCAS to switch them to direct debits, which members were able to do while on the phone or had the option of being sent the direct link to complete online. The calls ensured that the majority of members stayed with UNISON.

Although training and development were a challenge over this period, as part of ongoing training programme, all agents have in the past year received specialist training

in handling callers who identify as neurodiverse, and we continue to explore further training opportunities that will benefit our members as appropriate.

In 2021, UNISONdirect received over 21,000 enquires around members' contracts, over 10,000 contacts about concerns over COVID and their employment rights, and over 11,000 calls for information on sickness pay and absence.

Meanwhile, almost 5,000 members were put in touch with Thompsons to access free legal advice, and over 3,500 members were advised on their rulebook benefits. We updated the personal details of almost 14,000 members and assisted 12,000 members change employers to ensure that they remained in membership.

---

## UNISON Living

UNISON Living represents the union's package of extra benefits and services for members which are provided by endorsed providers (UNISON's affinity partners). These are long-term strategic partnerships bringing added value to members and to the union.

The endorsed providers have been carefully selected to ensure they meet UNISON's strict criteria for endorsement and therefore, the UNISON Living brand represents reputable and trusted partners with shared values and principles.

Partner endorsements are subject to ongoing monitoring, review and renewal processes and are underpinned by standard contracts, obligations and service level agreements to ensure a benefits programme that is fit for purpose and valuable to members.

Details of the offerings can be found at [benefits.unison.org.uk](https://benefits.unison.org.uk)

Furthermore, regional membership service forums have continued to meet virtually and connect providers with regional organisers and the branch network to maximise outreach to members and support recruitment, retention and organising activity.

During 2020/21, at the request of UNISON, the UNISON Living branded marketing activity was restricted to ensure that any activity was appropriate and sensitive to the COVID-19 climate. However, focus was still placed

on directing resources to support members during this unprecedented period.

Since then, resources have been directed by providers to reach out to members through UNISON's digital platforms, webinars, and surgeries. These channels have proved to be of great value and will be part of the UNISON Living work programme review going forward.

UNISON's Croyde Bay Holiday resort has, through the Covid-19 period, continued to operate, offering special and exclusive member short breaks and discounts to say 'THANK U' to our members delivering public services – providing much needed holidays for members and their families after lockdown and throughout 2021. Demand for a covid safe holiday was exceptionally high with all accommodation full since May with 98% capacity during the summer period. 2021 provided an opportunity for maintenance work and upgrades, informed by member feedback, to provide new and improved facilities. In 2022 the member discount was also increased from 15% to 20%.

Following concerns regarding the use of the UNISON Living brand logo by non-endorsed providers, the logo was trademark registered. Permissions for the UNISON logo and artwork continue to be held by our endorsed provider – TC Branding group – to protect brand reputation and ensure compliance with UNISON's supplier code of conduct.

In 2020/21 Union Energy and UNISON Drive were removed from the package and work is ongoing to find new partners to provide relevant and real value to the membership. The NEC's services to members committee and providers annual seminar, which was deferred from 2021 will focus on growing and promoting the UNISON Living benefits package as well as raising awareness of the affinity partner model and its value, including support for UNISON welfare – There for You – and UNISON's international development fund.

## Appendix 1 Membership statistics

### Line count Membership Figures by Region for 2020 and 2021 (Full Members)

#### Membership by region

Region	Sept 2020 (Last year) Full members	Sept 2021 (this year) Full members
Eastern	82,250	82,000
East Midlands	84,000	81,500
Greater London	116,750	115,500
Northern	76,250	73,500
Northern Ireland	44,500	44,000
North West	184,000	180,750
Scotland	156,000	153,000
South East	100,250	99,250
South West	80,000	79,000
Wales	88,000	86,750
West Midlands	110,000	108,500
Yorkshire & Humberside	129,250	125,000
	1,251,250	1,228,750

*These figures do not include retired members.*

## Appendix 2 Monitoring information

### 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.

Equality Monitoring information on members and stewards as at 1st March 2022.

#### Women as % of our membership:

2021 (last year)	2022 (this year)
Women full members 76.4% of full members	Women full members 75.8% of full members
Retired women 61.8% of retired members	Retired women 62.3% of retired members
Overall (all categories) 74.7%	Overall (all categories) 74.2%

#### Stewards:

##### % who are women

2021	%	2022	%
Steward	56.8	Steward	54.4
Stage 1 Steward	53.8	Stage 1 Steward	55.8
ERA Accredited Steward	53.0	ERA Accredited Steward	53.4
Overall	53.9	Overall	53.7

#### Health and safety reps:

##### % who are women

2021 = 45.0%

2022 = 45.2%

#### Branch Secretaries:

##### % who are women

2021 = 51.4%

2022 = 52.0%



## Appendix 3

### NEC meetings held since conference 2021

#### National Executive Council

##### 97% of NEC members responded to the 2021 survey

Female	68 %
Male	30 %
Other	2 %

##### Ethnicity

Black Caribbean	2%
Black African	5%
Black UK	2%
Asian	2%
Other Mixed Heritage	2%
Irish	12%
White UK	68%
White Other	7%

##### Disabled

Yes	48%
No	52%

##### Service Group

Local government	42%
Health care	30%
Community	8%
Energy	2.5%
Water, environment, transport	2.5%
Higher education	10%
Police & Justice	10%

##### Subs band

A – D (up to £11k)	9%
E – G (£11,001 - £20k)	31%
H – K (above £20k)	60%

##### Age

16-26	2.5%
27-39	9%
40-49	18.5%
50+	70%

- Friday 18th June 2021
- Wednesday 14th July 2021
- Wednesday 6th October 2021
- Wednesday 1st December 2021
- Tuesday 18th January 2022
- Wednesday 9th February 2022
- Tuesday 15th March 2022
- Wednesday 13th April 2022
- Wednesday 25th May 2022

## Appendix 4

### Conference delegate numbers

#### 2020-2021

Del = Delegates + Sharer 1s, where appropriate

Year	Black		Women's		HE		Comm		Health		Young		Energy	
	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All
2020	423	730	424	849	77	204	61	169	350	984	112	159	35	86
2021	37	40	2193	2243	10	18	251	275	402	551	77	147	33	98

Year	WET		Local Gov		National		Retired		Police		Disabled		LGBT	
	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All	Del	All
2020	24	67	548	811	971	1938					629	633	313	317
2021	37	96	618	771	1231	1499	280	348	65	216	242	392	179	292

#### Key

- No conference held
- Virtual conference/seminar



Produced by UNISON Communications. Published and printed by UNISON, 130 Euston Road, London NW1 2AY [www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)  
CU/APRIL 2022/26760/UNP16071/3,400

