

**UNISON – growing a stronger union in local government**

**Local Government Service Group  
Annual Report 2023**





# **Local Government Service Group Annual Report 2023**

## **1. Introduction**

## **2. Local Government Service Group Executive**

- 2.1 Organising to Win
- 2.2 Local government finance
- 2.3 Campaigning against the cuts / Local Service Champions
- 2.4 Future of Local Government
- 2.5 Privatisation and insourcing
- 2.6 Recruitment and organisation
- 2.7 Equalities and diversity
- 2.8 Report from the Review of the Future of the NJC

## **3. Local Government Pension Scheme**

## **4. Education and Children's Services**

## **5. Sector Committee Reports**

- 5.1 NJC Committee
- 5.2 Scottish Joint Council Committee
- 5.3 Chief Officers & Senior Managers Committee
- 5.4 Youth & Community Workers Committee
- 5.5 Schools Committee
- 5.6 FE & 6<sup>th</sup> Form Colleges Committee
- 5.7 Care Quality Commission (CQC) Committee
- 5.8 Ofsted Committee
- 5.9 FSA / FSS Committee

## **6. Occupational Groups**

- 6.1 Libraries and Cultural Services
- 6.2 Social Work
- 6.3 Social Care
- 6.4 Housing
- 6.5 Careers
- 6.6 Craftworkers
- 6.7 Fire and Rescue

## **7. Regional Service Group Reports**

- 7.1 Eastern
- 7.2 East Midlands
- 7.3 Greater London
- 7.4 Northern
- 7.5 Northern Ireland
- 7.6 North West
- 7.7 Scotland

- 7.8 South East
- 7.9 South West
- 7.10 Cymru/Wales
- 7.11 West Midlands
- 7.12 Yorkshire and Humberside

Appendix A – Composition of national service group committees

Appendix B – 2022 Local government service group conference decisions

## 1. Introduction

It has been another challenging year for UNISON members, activists and branches covered by the Local Government Service Group. Whether we're fighting for better pay, pushing for better funding for councils and schools, or campaigning for greater equality in the workplace and in society, the Local Government Service Group has worked hard to build our union and win for our members.

Our members have continued to provide vital public services. Whether they're educating children with special educational needs, providing vital support to vulnerable adults, children and families, keeping our libraries open in the face of severe cuts, or keeping our local environments clean, our members continue to go the extra mile – and those are just a few examples of the breadth of work covered by our Service Group.

Once again at this year's Conference we will be proud to celebrate the winners of our Local Service Champions awards – a celebration of some special UNISON members who have been recognised by their peers. We've also celebrated our members in schools through Stars in Our Schools day, and those in Further Education through Champions in our Colleges. But every single UNISON member in the Local Government Service Group plays a vital role, and we need to take that message into the heart of government as we campaign for a better deal for our members.

Last year our members ultimately accepted pay offers that were significant improvements on what we've seen before. But even that came only after the threat of major industrial action in Scotland, and soaring inflation meant that members continued to see their pay fall in real terms. At the time of writing, we are preparing to ballot for industrial action in support of our campaign for pay rises above inflation, to help members cope with the cost of living crisis. It is simply unacceptable that so many of our members are having to make impossible choices between food, heating and transport; struggling to survive and support their families. Our members need a decent pay increase and they need the Government to fund it.

Balloting for strike action isn't just about posting out ballot papers. Over the last year, your Service Group Executive has worked hard to explore exactly what makes a successful ballot. We know that at the centre of any campaign must be a serious organising effort – talking to members, bringing them into the union, engaging them in the campaigns, and identifying future leaders. We need to make the most of the tools available to contact members, combined with more traditional face to face organising.

We have seen the results of this work, especially in Scotland, where the industrial action ballot led to a surge in recruitment, which has begun to be reflected elsewhere. The challenge now is to make sure this is sustainable – with members retained and encouraged to participate.

The financial crisis faced by local government and schools is real, and while we have campaigned for better pay, UNISON has also led the campaign for better funding from Westminster for local authorities – including those in Wales, Scotland and

Northern Ireland through the funding given to the devolved administrations. UNISON's research revealed that local authorities in Britain were facing a funding gap of £3bn in one year alone, and we have engaged in wide-ranging campaigns, getting the public involved, pushing parliamentary debates, attracting press and social media coverage and training branches. We have also launched a schools funding campaign, aimed at highlighting how precarious so many schools are, and urging the Government to act.

Schools have continued to be a focal point for our campaigning over the last year. While members were told that COVID was over, they continued to face a variety of challenges. Members have faced dangerously decrepit buildings, poorly ventilated schools, pay below living wage levels, and – at times – violence at work. We have campaigned hard on these issues, raising them in the public and political consciousness and ensuring the Government and low-paying employers cannot hide.

Meanwhile, we continued to work on term-time only issues – securing more than £90m in backpay settlements for staff whose holiday entitlement has been historically underpaid, and achieving considerable success in recruiting new members to the union. The Government's response has been to consult on changing the law on holiday pay, to combat our achievements; we have vehemently opposed this and are winning locally.

In Cymru/Wales, with a Labour administration in place, relations with government are somewhat different from the rest of the UK. The social partnership model is beginning to deliver for our members – for example through excellent joint work on professional issues for our learning support assistant members. The local government funding picture is also somewhat better than elsewhere – though still very challenging for our members on the ground.

In Northern Ireland, Local Government members have led the way with our groundbreaking Free School Meals for All campaign, aimed at reducing poverty for our members and their families. The Service Group in Northern Ireland has also worked hard to address the serious pay and grading issues members face.

At every level of the Service Group there have been magnificent campaign victories over the last year, and these are detailed throughout this annual report. It seems unfair to single any out, but the achievements of South Ribble branch in successfully campaigning to get rubbish, recycling and garden waste services brought back in-house from a private company, and Barnet branch in getting 330 staff who provide trading standards, environmental health, planning highways and other regulatory services back in-house (from Capita) are fantastic achievements that we can learn from. The Service Group continues to offer guidance and support to branches trying to win insourcing campaigns.

The Service Group campaigns for a more equal society and against inequality in our own workplaces. We know that part of that is ensuring our own membership represents the workforce. Throughout 2022 we worked with the Disabled Members' Group on supporting UNISON's Year of Disabled Workers 2022. Our work focused on promoting the Disability Employment Charter - asking local government

employers and council leaders to adopt it and join UNISON in calling on the government to take urgent action to improve the rights of disabled workers.

In 2023, we are working closely with the National Black Members' Committee on the Year of the Black Worker. We have a particular focus on mentoring young Black activists and improving representation on our own committees.

The Service Group is also working with the National Women's Committee on initiatives to help combat sexual harassment and misogynistic behaviours within local government workplaces. And we have worked very hard on LGBT+ issues; members from service group committees participated in UNISON's trans ally training developed and delivered by UNISON's national trans caucus group.

During the coming months, the Service Group will continue to work with the National Young Members' Forum to develop a strategy to increase the numbers of young members and activists in local government.

Throughout the year, the Service Group Executive has tried to focus on what makes a difference to our members in real and practical terms. We have shared good practice from around the 12 regions and nations and analysed what works in other service groups as well as our own. It is always the position of your Service Group Executive to seek the views of our members, to listen, learn and to lead on key issues. It is recognised we can always do more, but this annual report is a reflection of the brilliant work undertaken despite the challenges we all face.

Finally, amidst all of our day-to-day work, it's vital that our organising and campaigning aren't limited by the nature of the challenges we face. Our work on developing a positive vision for the future of local government seeks to strengthen calls for the defence of local government services, and for real terms pay rises for local government workers, along with proper funding and powers, by setting out how services and local economies could be safeguarded and transformed for the better with the injection of funding needed. We need to put forward the positive case for even greater funding, wider powers and a greater focus on urgent areas, including climate change and the cost-of-living. This will be a major task, but it's one that our members show every day that they are ready for.

Glen Williams  
Chair, Local Government Service Group Executive

Mike Short  
National Secretary, Local Government and Education

## 2. Local Government Service Group Executive

### 2.1 Organising to Win

UNISON's 2022 Local Government Conference passed the composite 'Organising to Win'. This composite states that:

*This conference resolves to request the SGE liaise and work with the NEC Industrial Action Committee to:*

- i) Request that the SGE establishes a working group to examine and explore the organising methods used in both local and national trade union ballots, within the local government service group, that have surpassed the 50% ballot thresholds in recent times. For this working group to undertake this task to make findings and recommendations on which methods of organising are key to holding successful industrial action ballots in local government;*
- ii) Request that the SGE seek to work with other relevant parts of UNISON to devise a UNISON training course for activists in local government on how to organise industrial action ballots and win disputes;*
- iii) Request that the SGE seek to work through UNISON's structures to explore if there is a possibility of a co-ordinated all service group and UNISON wide approach to the actions in points i and ii.*

The Local Government Service Group Executive (SGE) agreed that its 'Pay and Service Conditions Working Group' should be convened as the body to progress and oversee this work. This group already exists within the SGE's handbook and SGE members were elected to this working group at the AGM in July 2022.

Work on this composite started in 2022. The National Secretary was asked by the Chair of the SGE to start work ahead of a meeting of the working group, on identifying and surveying those branches that had "...passed the 50% ballot threshold in recent times.". Officers requested data from UNISON's ballots department to identify the local government service group employers in which UNISON had run ballots that achieved at least a 50% turnout.

44 separate ballots were identified as being in scope for this work in 34 branches. Since then, another two ballots have been identified taking the branch total to 35.

The branches identified were sent a link to a survey asking them to share their experiences of organising successful industrial action ballots. Branches that had organised more than one successful ballot since the 2016 Trade Union Act were told that they could fill in the survey more than once and specify which ballot they were referring to in each response. By the deadline of 22 February 2022 there were 23 responses to the survey.

The working group met in March. It carefully considered the report and agreed the recommendations from the report as set out below.



- a. To work with Communications to produce a 'get the vote out guide' based on the findings of this survey. This resource would be for local government branches running industrial action ballots.
- b. To update this report with further data from other sectors and service groups as it becomes available.
- c. To work with UNISON's Learning and Organising Services department (LAOS) to:
  - i. Determine which existing courses would be useful for local government branches balloting for strike action or preparing to do so;
  - ii. Determine if any new courses need to be developed or if current ones need adapting/updating;
  - iii. Produce and circulate to branches a short, clear guide on the range of training available relating to organising around industrial action.

Since then, work has continued with LAOS to update activist courses on organising successful ballots and work has commenced with UNISON's communications and campaigns officers to create effective 'organising to win/get the vote out' guides for branches running industrial action ballots. Work will continue throughout 2023 and the committee will meet again to consider progress on this work.

## **2.2 Local government finance**

The financial situation for local councils across the UK remains as bleak as ever. New UNISON research carried out in the summer of 2022 revealed the extent of the funding shortfall faced by councils for the financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25. At the time of our research, we found that councils across England, Wales and Scotland were facing a predicted collective funding gap of £3.19bn in 2023/24, rising to over £5.2bn in 2024/25. 86% of councils reported (either in direct response to our FOI request or in their Medium-Term Financial Strategy papers) that they were predicting a funding gap. Regionally, Scottish councils were facing the largest collective funding gap for 2023/24 (£555m) followed by councils in Greater London (£441m) and the North West (£405m). Our research generated extensive coverage nationally in [the Guardian](#) and Mirror, as well as in regional press outlets.

The Westminster Government announced its Local Government Financial Settlement in early 2023. As well as failing to address the funding shortfalls faced by councils across the country (highlighted by UNISON research) it represented another one-year settlement (making it harder for councils to plan for the long term) and again provided no details of the long-awaited Fair Funding Review. Years of central government tacitly encouraging councils to generate their own income thanks to the huge levels of funding cuts since 2010 are seeing more councils becoming effectively bankrupt after botched investment schemes and financial mismanagement. Croydon, Slough and Thurrock councils all issued section 114

notices whilst other councils like Woking and Warrington are in major difficulty due to their levels of debt.

Analysis of the Scottish Government's local government budget settlement by the Scottish Audit Commission supported UNISON's assessment of how councils in Scotland have been failed. Their report highlighted how Scottish councils face the most difficult budget-setting context seen for many years with the ongoing impacts of Covid-19, inflation and the cost-of-living crisis. Two-thirds of councils intend to use reserves to help bridge the 2022/23 budget gap between anticipated expenditure and revenue of £0.4 billion but this reliance on non-recurring reserves is not sustainable. An increasing proportion of local government funding is now either formally ring-fenced or provided with the expectation that it will be spent on specific services. They calculate this to be 23% of total revenue funding in 2021/22. The report also focused on how council funding has been neglected compared to other areas of the public sector in Scotland in the last decade. Revenue funding from Scottish Government to local government between 2013/14 and 2021/22 increased by 6.1% (in real terms) whereas Scottish Government revenue funding to other parts of the Scottish Government budget increased by a significantly higher figure of 27.2% over the same period.

In Wales, council funding is due to increase by 7.9% on average but council leaders have stated that this will still not close the significant funding gaps that they face. The Welsh Local Government Association have indicated that this funding increase will only cover around half the funding gap that councils are facing, meaning that it is likely there will be a combination of significant council tax increases and service cuts.

Across the UK, given the many years of funding cuts, the financial outlook for local councils will remain very challenging for the foreseeable future with an increasing number of councils planning on making cuts to services and jobs.

### **2.3 Campaigning against the cuts / Local Service Champions**

Campaigning on local government funding and cuts has remained a key priority for the Local Government Service Group over the last year, especially with the ongoing long-term failure by governments across the UK to fund councils properly. We have worked through the media, social media, politically and through member participation to put pressure on the Government in Westminster to increase local government funding (and consequently the funding given to the devolved governments). We have worked with the UNISON Scotland and UNISON Cymru/Wales to support their work to put pressure on the devolved governments to direct more funding to councils there.

Our [council cuts website](#) was updated in the summer of 2022 following our extensive Freedom of Information requests (described in the local government finance section of this report) to show the individual funding shortfalls that all upper tier councils across Scotland, Cymru/Wales and England are currently facing for the financial year 2023/24. UNISON members and members of the public were able to click on the map to see what the situation is like in their local area. We also provided details of the individual funding shortfalls faced by district and borough councils for the

same financial year which can be viewed [here](#). The email action tool has to date generated three and a half thousand emails being sent to MPs/MSPs and Senedd members (MSs) calling for more funding for council services. The Communications team has also provided template messages for regional activists and branch secretaries to use in order to increase the number of members who visit the council cuts website and go on to send emails calling for more funding to MPs/MSPs and MSs.

The Service Group provided another round of local government finance training for activists and organisers from all UNISON regions, delivered by the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) throughout 2022. The training, which has been run for a number of years remains very popular with activists. It helps branches and organisers 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.

The Service Group worked with George Howarth MP to submit an Early Day Motion on the need for more local government funding to help identify MPs across Parliament who are supportive of our efforts. We are continuing to liaise with the office of Lisa Nandy, the Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, to secure a parliamentary debate on council funding.

Work is underway with the press team to run a nationwide opinion poll that should demonstrate the strength of public support for greater funding for local councils. The results from the poll will be used in our campaigning work across the UK.

We have continued to press successive Secretaries of State for Levelling Up, most recently Michael Gove, to engage constructively with UNISON on local government funding.

The Service Group continue to explore new and creative approaches to funding and opposing cuts in local government; see the section of this annual report on the future of local government.

## **Local Service Champions**

Last summer saw the launch of UNISON's Local Service Champions Awards. The awards are designed to raise the profile of local government workers and the vital, and often overlooked, work they undertake. This campaign links strongly to UNISON's arguments against cuts to services and jobs, and for fairer funding for local government services. The awards also enable UNISON to promote the work of our members to national and local politicians, the press, influential local government organisations and the public, and hence help make the case for better pay.

UNISON received nearly 1,000 nominations from across the UK in 2022. Winners received their awards at Local Government Conference and Disabled Members' Conference. Films of the winners were produced and promoted, including an interview between the overall winner, Paddy Toner from Halton Borough Council and the actor, Christopher Eccleston. Involving celebrities in the campaign expands the campaign's reach beyond those normally connecting with trade union activism.

During the campaign, UNISON's Local Service Champions web page had nearly 50,000 views.

The success of the awards led to UNISON's first Champions Day being held on 7 December 2022, with materials produced to support branches. The day gave branches the opportunity to showcase the 'champions' in their own workplaces, promote recruitment and organising projects, and highlight the need for jobs and services to be fully funded. Champions Day also marked the launch of nominations for the 2023 awards.

There was widespread coverage of the day across UNISON social media, with lots of posts from branches and regions, plus messages of support from councillors and MPs. It is hoped that this year's campaign can build upon this initial success.

Alongside UNISON's Champions campaign, the service group is working with a journalist to capture positive testimonies from the public about the help and support they receive from local councils. The aim is to use the stories gathered to advocate for the crucial work UNISON members in local government do and the positive impact that work has on everyday lives.

## **2.4 Future of Local Government**

During 2022 the Local Government Service Group Executive (SGE) continued its work developing a positive vision for the future of local government. This piece of work is designed to complement and bolster the work of the SGE in campaigning for better pay and more local government funding.

The purpose of this piece of work is to strengthen calls for the defence of local government services, and for real terms pay rises for local government workers, along with proper funding and powers, by setting out how services and local economies could be safeguarded and transformed for the better with the injection of funding needed. This would advance the argument on pay and funding by moving it beyond a call to restore the sector to pre-2010 levels – putting forward the positive case for even greater funding, wider powers and a greater focus on urgent areas including climate change and the cost-of-living.

Externally, it is a chance to engage a wider citizenship audience in a discussion about the future of local government, and to persuade them of the need for better funding and pay. It can also help to influence decision-makers and Labour policy. Internally, it is an opportunity to grapple with some policy areas where UNISON doesn't have agreed policies such as English devolution and new forms of taxation – and to ensure policy positions on these emerging issues are carefully developed to reflect members' priorities and protect their jobs, pay and conditions.

In July 2022 the SGE organised a themed workshop at their seminar in Scotland to feed into project development, and developed plans for member engagement. Officers organised online meetings for members to be able to feed in their views, and also attended branch and regional meetings to talk with members about their priorities for the future of local government and the challenges they face in their daily jobs.

Feedback from members included:

- Agreement that local government can and should play a bigger role in tackling the big issues of today such as climate change and the cost-of-living crisis
- A belief in developing services from the bottom-up, working with communities to understand need and developing council services that address them
- The need for devolution to draw power from the centre, not reduce the power of councils and communities
- A focus on preventive services
- Developing a narrative regarding towns and regions in decline, showing the role of local government and public services in driving fairer economic growth
- A view that council tax is antiquated and regressive and should be scrapped with different ways for places to raise income as well as a greater focus on redistribution from the centre based on need
- The need for transparency in devolution deals – being able to see where the money has gone and how it has benefited communities

The SGE drafted a motion covering these issues which the NEC has submitted to National Delegate Conference to be debated in June 2023, as well as a motion focusing on workforce aspects of the future of local government submitted by the SGE to local government service group conference. Meanwhile, work to develop these ideas further continued – including positive engagement with the Shadow Levelling Up team and working with regions to respond to devolution proposals in their areas such as the proposed North East devolution deal.

## **2.5 Privatisation and insourcing**

UNISON remains a key and successful leader in opposing privatisation and a proponent of insourcing. Over the last year, the Local Government Service Group has supported branches to bring services in-house. Working with the Bargaining Support Unit, a new insourcing guide was produced. The guide is a comprehensive toolkit to campaign to bring services in-house. It advises branches to establish a clear picture of what is already outsourced, to mobilise staff, build union strength, recruit activists, and gather opinions and views of those delivering the service and the people using it. It also includes working with the media and elected officials alongside the local community to maximise strength.

We are making progress at a number of councils. Staff at Barnet council are due to be transferred back to council employment thanks to a decades-long campaign by UNISON. The 330 affected workers are currently employed by outsourcing multinational conglomerate, Capita and are being brought back in-house after the council was used as a test case for outsourcing local government services.

The staff who work under a joint venture in various areas including trading standards, environmental health, planning highways and other regulatory services, will be TUPE transferred back in-house on 1 April 2023. The victory is a credit to the years of campaigning by the branch and shows the power of union organising in bringing services back in-house.

This is part of a trend to bring services back in-house. After thirty years, South Ribble Borough Council is to insource its rubbish, recycling and garden waste service from a private company. Southwark Council will bring the management of its eight leisure centres in-house when the current contract with leisure provider, Everyone Active, expires in June 2023. Lewisham Council will return its housing management and development in-house in October 2023.

However, there are concerning developments that we must watch. In Scotland, the proposed National Care Service (NCS) will not be a system like the NHS and goes against our belief that public services should be publicly delivered. The Scottish Government's aim is that the NCS will bring together social work, social care, and community health. These services won't be delivered directly by public sector bodies – but purchased by new quangos (Care Boards) from the public, private and third sectors. This will be a fundamental challenge to local government services.

In Cymru/Wales, the Welsh Government commissioned the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) to produce a toolkit for insourcing. While welcome, there is mention and support for alternative forms of service delivery such as worker-owned co-operatives, third-sector delivery and social enterprises.

To support the campaign for in-house services, the Local Government Service Group has engaged in innovative new ways to showcase the work of UNISON activists and members. Our new podcast platform will launch soon. We have also commissioned the largest survey of the impact of local authority wholly-owned companies on our member's pay, terms and conditions. Working with the Labour Research Department, the findings are due to be published later in 2023.

## **2.6 Recruitment and organisation**

UNISON recruited over 80,000 new members in the Local Government Service Group in 2022. This was an increase of 25% on the previous year and a decrease of 7% when compared to 2020.

The region with the biggest rate of growth was Scotland which recruited nearly 16,000 new members in 2022. That was 122% more members than in 2021 and 72% more than the number of new joiners in 2021. This growth was clearly linked to the pay campaign, including consultations and industrial action ballots that were run in relation to the Scottish Joint Council (SJC) pay offer. This was followed by Northern Ireland where the number of new joiners was 93.5% higher than in 2021. Both Scotland and Northern Ireland showed a significant net increase in membership at year end 2022.

By the end of 2022 there were around 573,000 thousand members in the Service Group across the UK.

The number of members leaving the Service Group, meanwhile, rose marginally, with just over 80,000 people leaving. This was an increase of 1% on the previous year. There was a very slight net gain in membership across the whole service group which is good news when compared to 2021 when more members left membership than joined.

At the end of 2022, UNISON had around 6,044 representatives in the Local Government Service Group. This was a 3% drop compared to 12 months earlier, but that was a smaller decrease than seen in 2021. There are 1,484 health and safety reps in the Service Group, representing a decrease on the previous year of 11%. Overall, there remains an urgent need to arrest the decline in membership participation and to increase the number of members taking on both statutory union roles such as health and safety rep, steward and union learning rep, as well as other roles including workplace contact, pay campaign contact and equalities rep. The Service Group knows that branches are struggling to organise and represent members, as facility time is tightened and members are increasingly wary of getting involved.

As part of the 2022 NJC pay campaign the role of the 'pay campaign contact' was introduced. This is a new and important activist role which will help to ensure that branches are able to reach all areas of membership and run more effective pay campaigns including building the campaign in the workplace, running effective pay consultations and industrial action ballots.

The latest data shows that just over 70% of local government members are female and that just over 63% of UNISON activists in local government branches and workplaces are female.

The impact of the pandemic on members' working lives has continued to have knock-on effects on the ability of branches to recruit and organise in local government. In many places there are still constraints placed on our reps' ability to engage face to face with many membership groups. However, the great work done by our branches, regions and Service Group to represent them and negotiate to protect and improve pay, safety at work and terms and conditions is reflected by the significant increase in membership over the past year. Continued home working for many groups – and the lack of access afforded to many of our activists – is reflected in the disappointing reduction in the number of reps.

The SGE's Recruitment and Organising Working Group met regularly over the last year, developing initiatives and feeding ideas into the full SGE. In 2021 the SGE had agreed that organising young workers must be a key priority for the Service Group. Following on from decisions made at the 2021 SGE seminar, a fringe meeting took

place at the 2022 Local Government Conference with input from the National Young Members' Forum and speakers from young activists in local government.

The Working Group continued to develop practical resources to help branches and regions recruit and organise. The Group also continued to focus on digital organising and develop its resources for branches. Following the branch survey on digital skills, training and resources that found that a third of branches don't have a website and that around half of branches don't have the skills they need to maintain websites or social media accounts, this group organised a webinar. The webinar was held in September 2022 and reached over 100 activists. The webinar brought together expertise from UNISON's Learning and Organising Services (LAOS) as well as the digital and communications teams. Branches found out how they could access free online training on digital organising as well hearing about lots of ways to make digital organising and campaigns more effective.

The Recruiting and Organising Working Group and the full SGE also received a presentation on the Membership Engagement Project (MEP). The group has also commissioned an update on local government data from UNISON's Organising Framework, to see if trends in recruitment and organising can be ascertained.

## **2.7 Equalities and diversity**

The Local Government Equalities Liaison Committee meets twice a year, so that the Service Group, Self Organised Groups and National Young Members' Forum can discuss developments relating to equalities in local government, and practical measures to improve the way we represent, organise and campaign on equality issues.

We have continued to publicise and monitor the disproportionate impact cuts to jobs, pay and conditions in local government are having on protected groups, as workers and service users, across the UK through the Service Group's [anti-cuts and save our local services campaigns](#).

The Local Government Service Group continues to assist branches to use equality legislation and principles to challenge cuts to jobs, pay, terms and conditions, and proposals to change the delivery of services. We continue to advise branches that employers should carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to demonstrate that they have shown "due regard" under the General Equality Duty and to assist them in doing so. We also advise branches that NJC guidance requires authorities to have regard to equality standards and use the [Equality Framework Local Government \(EFLG\) England](#), the [Equality Improvement Framework for Wales](#) and [Fairer Scotland Duty - Guidance Public Bodies](#), all of which promote EIAs. It is the experience of the Service Group that most authorities are conducting EIAs on changes to terms and conditions of employment, thanks to the efforts of the Local Government team, branches, and regions.

During 2022 we have continuously signposted members, branches and regions to UNISON LGBT+ bargaining factsheets, surveys and events published by the UNISON Equality Unit and the Service Group Executive guidance on [Improving Trans Equality in Local Government Workplaces](#). We have also encouraged the



negotiation of inclusive language in local government agreements and policies and inclusive practices and procedures across local government workplaces. We encourage members, branches, regions, and service group sector committees/forums to provide good practice examples of local government workplace agreements on trans equality, bargaining gains, and successful cases. And In March 2023, members from the service group sector committees/forums participated in UNISON's trans ally training developed and delivered by UNISON's national trans caucus group. During the coming months, the Service Group will continue to signpost branches and regions to a wealth of relevant UNISON resources and training to promote trans equality in local government workplaces.

Throughout 2022 we have worked with the Disabled Members self-organised group on supporting UNISON's Year of Disabled Workers 2022. Our work focused on promoting the [Disability Employment Charter](#). The Service Group has regularly encouraged branches and regions to use our model letter to ask local government employers and council leaders to adopt it and join UNISON in calling on the government to take urgent action to improve the rights of disabled workers. We have regularly published an article in the Service Group councillors' newsletter about the Charter. Local government branches and regions have been asked to complete a [short online survey](#) that will provide us with important information about how successful branches and regions have been in getting council leaders and local government employers to commit to the [Disability Employment Charter](#). The survey also gives branches the opportunity to tell us about their experiences of supporting disabled members. During the coming months, the service group will send regular reminders to branches and regions about promoting the Charter and ask them to provide us with feedback. The Service Group will also continue to signpost branches to relevant resources through branch circulars and encourage them to use them.

The Local Government Service Group Executive is committed to working with the National Black Members' Committee on the Year of Black Workers. We strongly encourage local government members, branches and regions to use the Year of Black Workers 2023 to focus on building on our organising work to increase meaningful participation of Black activists, particularly young Black activists, who can provide a voice in the workplace for others. This will also help to ensure that our branches and service group sector committees/forums are more representative. The Service Group and the Black members' self-organised group have worked tirelessly throughout 2022 to promote the Service Group Executive guidance on [Empowering Young Black People in Local Government Workplaces Through Mentoring in UNISON](#) and encourage branches, regions, and service group sector committees to promote and use the guidance to increase representation and activism among young Black people. During the coming months, the Service Group will continue to support the self-organised group campaign on the Year of Black Workers. This will include supporting the work on improving representation of Black members within local government service group structures, promoting a toolkit for how branches and regions can get involved, supporting the call for mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting and signposting branches to a wealth of relevant resources through branch circulars and encouraging them to use them.

During the coming months, the Service Group will work with the National Women's Committee to undertake two new surveys, one for branches to complete and the other for women members to complete about their experiences of all forms of sexual harassment and misogynistic behaviours within local government workplaces.

During the coming months, the Service Group will continue to work with the National Young Members' Forum to develop a strategy to increase the numbers of young members and activists in local government. We will seek to promote UNISON membership among young local government workers, encourage members to become active and support campaigns on the issues that are important to them. We will also continue to encourage local government branches and regions to use UNISON's resources to recruit, organise, and increase meaningful participation of young people, social work students and particularly young Black, disabled, and LGBT+ members who remain underrepresented in UNISON and local government.

## **2.8 Report from the Review of the Future of the NJC**

Motion 4 carried at the 2021 Special Virtual Local Government Conference called on the Service Group Executive (SGE), working with the NJC Committee, regions and branches "to conduct a review of the National Joint Council and how it functions, including its relationship with and autonomy within the Local Government Service Group Executive, assessing all of its benefits, costs and drawbacks for members, and to report back to Local Government Conference on an interim basis in 2022 and in full in 2023."

Following the Conference, the SGE set up a joint working group with the NJC Committee to take this work forward. The group was set up to ensure equal representation between the two committees, while ensuring a voice for low paid women and the devolved nations.

The group started its work by conducting an informal review of the breadth of work carried out by the NJC presently and historically, covering areas like pay negotiations, job evaluation and pay and grading, school-specific work, terms and conditions, and devolution issues. The group had an initial discussion about the disappointing turnout in the 2021 NJC industrial action ballot, while acknowledging that similar review work would take place in the NJC Committee. Further work analysing turnouts took place following the consultation on the 2022 NJC pay offer, and through the 'Organising to Win' work reported on elsewhere in this Annual Report.

After this, the group conducted a survey of branches, regions and Self-Organised Groups, to obtain their views on the successes, failures, benefits and drawbacks of the NJC under the following headings: the role of the NJC; the joint trade union / employer bargaining system; the joint trade union set-up; the UNISON's internal system for NJC decision-making; how we consult members on final pay claims; equal pay; conditions and workplace issues; and low turnouts in industrial action ballots.

In November 2022, the working group received the following key findings from the survey:

- A majority of branches were unaware of the full scope of the NJC
- There were mixed views on the focus of NJC campaigns and negotiations (ie not solely focussed on pay) but an acceptance that what is currently in place is the best way forward
- Inter-union relations and delays in balloting were raised as major issues
- There were comments about processes being slow and claims not being based on reality
- The way final pay claim consultations had been run on the last two occasions, with regions offering a digital consultation and branches opting in, was the most popular
- A majority said that the current internal structure should remain, and there were no strong feelings nor any mandate for pursuing change

On this basis, the working group agreed that no internal structural change was desired by branches, and this finding was endorsed by the Service Group Executive (SGE) when it met in November 2022.

The group also agreed that there is a clear need to promote and raise awareness of the NJC and its role. The working group therefore recommended that the Service Group should:

- Produce an annual bulletin outlining the achievements of the NJC over the year
- Produce summary guidance for branches and members to promote the NJC and what it does, to increase interest and participation, and to assist in understanding our structures
- Ensure that we continue to prioritise speed at each stage of the NJC pay process, and continue to push the other unions to do the same and to co-ordinate timetables.

The SGE endorsed these recommendations. This review is now complete, but work will continue on the various actions agreed.

### **3. Local Government Pension Scheme**

#### **Regulations**

There has been little change to the benefit regulations for the three UK Local Government Pension Schemes (LGPS).

UNISON continues to push for long awaited regulations on introducing New Fair Deal to give greater protection for outsourced staff and regulations to backdate service for widowers' pensions in the light of the Goodwin case.

At the time of writing the Government has made no move to bring back any mandatory cap on severance payments since revoking the £95,000 cap in LGPS England. It has issued a New Value Statutory Guidance on Special Severance Payments for England and it is unclear what effect this has had on Local Government employers' severance awards.

Draft regulations allowing the remedy for the McCloud judgment age discrimination case are expected very soon. The target is that the remedy should be applied from late autumn 2023 year to eligible members who have retired since April 2015 (2014 for England and Wales). The remedy is a test to see whether the previous LGPS final salary section would provide higher benefits than the current LGPS for service from April 2015/2014 to April 2022. The Judicial Review that challenged the decision to pass on the costs of McCloud to the members through cost share was recently lost in the High Court. The decision whether to appeal to the Supreme Court is awaited.

### **LGPS and outsourcing**

UNISON continues to oppose employers especially in the housing, voluntary and university sectors leaving the LGPS. In a number of cases, it has led to a strong campaigning response. There is a specific threat to LGPS members in the care sector working in Scotland, arising from the nature of the proposals to set up a National Care Service. If future access is denied to care workers, it could destabilise the funds.

### **Valuations**

Through the relevant committees, UNISON has been working on agreeing the scheme assumptions to be used at the next cost share valuations. Overall, with recent increases in interest rates, the funding levels of the LGPS Funds continue to improve, and UNISON has briefed its reps on the Pension Boards to argue against the moves by some Funds to cut employer contributions.

### **Fund mergers**

The Scheme Advisory Board in Scotland has continued its examination of Pooling and Fund Mergers, with two Funds announcing outline proposals to merge.

### **The LGPS Forum and Local Forums**

Local Pensions Forums bringing together reps in UNISON regions and nations have met regularly throughout the year and the UNISON LGPS forum has restarted. A number of topics have been discussed including how the LGPS can limit the effect of climate change through its investment strategies.

## 4. Education and Children's Services

Note there are additional sector specific sections later in this annual report, which give more detail on the work of our education committees.

### Education Funding

Across the UK, despite some increases in funding, the impact of high inflation and particularly increased energy bills and staffing costs has impacted on school finances.

#### England

In the 2022 Autumn Statement, the Government announced an additional £2.3 billion for the core schools budget in each of the financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25. This is more than the amount originally promised in the 2021 spending review. This funding is made up of £2 billion 'new' money, and a £300 million saved owing to the abolition of the Health and Social Care Levy, in each year.

The Government has also made around £4.9 billion available for education recovery from the pandemic. This is far less than the education recovery commissioner, Sir Kevan Collins, called for.

The schools capital expenditure budget was cut from £6.3bn to £5.9bn in the Autumn Statement, which is particularly worrying when there are warnings about the state of the school estate.

Changes to the National Funding Formula had been expected as part of the now shelved Schools Bill. We await further announcements on how the Government intends to proceed with this.

#### Scotland

The main education budget has been increased by 4% and the capital budget by 21.6%. Part of this increase was an extra £145.5m set aside for the additional recruitment of teachers and support staff in schools.

#### Wales

In July, the Welsh Government announced that schools expenditure per pupil for 2022-23 is budgeted to be £6,773, a year-on-year increase of 6% or £386 per pupil.

#### Northern Ireland

In December, the Government announced that the basic funding for schools would be cut by 0.5%. Although there was some additional funding for teachers' pay and increased energy costs, this is likely to result in real term cuts, with a significant impact on staff.

## **Education funding campaign**

In response to the ongoing financial crisis in education, in 2022 we set up a new campaign on school funding, to complement existing work. The campaign was launched on Stars in our Schools day in November, with branches engaging in a range of activities to promote our campaign messages and get public and political support for the objective of getting more investment in schools.

Further ongoing and planned work includes a tool to enable the public to email local politicians to raise the issue; research into the schools funding gap, to highlight exactly what funding has been lost in schools and what is needed; a survey of parents; publicity stunts in the constituencies of key Conservative MPs; work to influence Labour policy; blog pieces on external education websites; parliamentary debates; exploration of international comparisons; and working with partner organisations.

## **5. Sector Committee Reports**

### **5.1 NJC Committee**

#### **NJC pay**

The NJC pay claim for 2022 was submitted in June 2022, following the delayed completion of the 2021 pay round. The joint unions' headline claim was for a pay increase of £2,000 or RPI inflation, whichever was the greater. The pay claim was accompanied by a strong campaign, highlighting the cost of living crisis that members were – and are – suffering. In July, the Employers' Side responded with a pay offer of an increase of £1,925 on each pay point (pro rata'd for part-time workers), and an increase of one day of annual leave for all staff.

Following an informal consultation of branches conducted at regional level, the NJC Committee decided to conduct a full consultation of members. The Committee also decided not to make an accept or reject recommendation, instead presenting the pros and cons of the offer.

The consultation was conducted predominantly digitally, with most regions either running the consultation on behalf of branches or offering branches support in doing so, backed up by digital and financial resources from UNISON Centre.

UNISON members voted to accept the offer, with 63.5% voting to accept and 36.5% voting to reject, on a turnout of 33.8%. This turnout was significantly higher than in previous years, and 13 percentage points higher than the equivalent consultation in 2021. Two regions (Northern and South West) achieved a turnout above 40%, and a further five regions achieved a turnout between 30% and 40%.

GMB members also voted to accept the offer, and although Unite members voted to reject, this meant the clear verdict from the joint trade unions was to accept.

Settlement was therefore reached on 1 November, and members received the pay increase and backpay after that.

Following the settlement, UNISON issued guidance to branches on the potential for Universal Credit payments to be affected due to the payment of so many months' backpay in one go. We also dealt with a number of multi-academy trusts which sought to avoid paying backpay all the way back to April; legal advice was sought where necessary and this work is ongoing.

Following the completion of the pay round, a survey of branches regarding the consultation was conducted. Branches made clear that while we should continue to seek to co-ordinate timetables with the other unions, it should be a priority to move each stage along as quickly as possible. The NJC Committee made clear that a priority for the next pay round had to be a much faster timetable, with a pay claim for 2023 submitted by the end of January 2023. We should also seek to explain even more clearly the impact of a flat rate offer, if another were to be received in 2023, along with emphasising the importance of getting high turnouts in consultations and ballots.

The NJC pay claim for 2023 was submitted in January, with a headline claim for an increase of RPI + 2%. Based on the Government's inflation projections for 2023, the claim equated to an increase of 12.7%. A high-profile and wide-ranging campaign was launched, putting pressure on the employers to make a decent pay offer, as our members are suffering from a huge cost of living crisis, and calling on the Government to fund it – recognising that the financial situation in local government is difficult.

The employers responded in February with a pay offer of another flat rate increase of £1,925 on all pay points (pro rata'd for part-time workers). Following a consultation of branches conducted in regions, the NJC Committee decided to reject this offer on behalf of members, and move to run disaggregated industrial action ballots.

At the time of writing, a major data cleansing and data preparation exercise was under way, and a massive 'get out the vote' campaign was being developed. These will involve getting members to update their details in advance of the industrial action ballots; use of the Movement phone banking and mass texting system; clear explanations of what the offer means for members (including part-time and term time only workers) and how far short it falls of what they need; continuing to lobby councillors and councils to put pressure on the employers to raise the offer; putting pressure on the government to fund a decent pay rise; encouraging member participation in the campaign (including online activist meetings); a range of physical, digital and social media campaign resources; and a sophisticated pay calculator which show members what they stand to lose in real terms, depending on their own

circumstances (full-time, part-time, term-time). We are working closely with regions and the Strategic Organising Unit.

Based on previous years, we expect the ballot to cover up to 370,000 members in around 4,000 employers.

## **Job evaluation**

While the NJC Job Evaluation Technical Working Group has not met in the past year, there has been a lot of activity in this area over the last year.

In Cymru/Wales, under the auspices of the Welsh Government, working groups have been established to develop job profiles for social care support roles to ensure a consistent nationwide approach to evaluating such roles. The ambition is to have a single framework for direct care within the social care sector, setting out descriptions of roles aligned with pay bands, by 2026. The framework aims to improve recruitment and retention in social care, support workforce development through increasing skills and knowledge, and provide a clear progression route.

It is anticipated that the work will cover five levels: social care assistant/apprentice; social care worker; senior social care worker / team leader; social care professional practitioner; social care manager.

A separate working group has been established to do similar work for learning support assistant roles.

An increasing number of councils have been reviewing their pay and grading structures in the light of compression at the lower end. Others have been doing so to remove lengthy incremental grades and overlapping pay grades, both of which run the risk of equal pay issues.

The Service Group continues to offer and deliver job evaluation training on the NJC Scheme, the Greater London Provincial Council Scheme and the Hay Scheme.

The Service Group is participating in a working group to develop apprenticeship teaching assistant courses, initially at level 4, but potentially higher levels.

## **NJC Working Group on Term Time Only Working**

The NJC Working Group on Term Time Only (TTO) workers published updated guidance in December 2022. The 2022/23 NJC settlement re-confirmed the commitment to produce further guidance around the issues of sickness and sick pay for term time only staff and all types of parental leave and pay. The Joint Secretaries have been meeting to consider the principles and it is hoped that this guidance will be available later this year.

Guidance has also been issued in respect of the additional public holidays for the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II and the coronation of King Charles III, to ensure that all term time only staff benefit from the additional annual leave.



See section 5.5 on the Schools Committee for more detailed information about UNISON's work on term time only issues and the *Brazel* case.

## **Public health**

The Standing Group on Public Health, which includes representatives of the Association of Directors of Public Health, Health Education England, Faculty of Public Health, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, UK Health Security Agency, North West Employers and UNISON, continues to meet on a bi-monthly basis. Its current focus is on developing the public health workforce to ensure that it can meet the challenges of health promotion and health protection. It has met with stakeholder groups to consider lack of capacity, skill mix career opportunities, career pathways and the ability to move around the different organisations delivering public health. This requires looking at not only the core public health workforce, but also the wider public health workforce, including environmental health, social care and housing professionals among many other occupations. Research has shown there is a shortage in the system of public health specialists, health visitors, sexual and reproduction health workers, drug and alcohol workers and environment health workers.

The main issues identified include promoting an equal, diverse and inclusive workforce, leadership, attracting and retaining talent and experience, data, innovation, understanding organisational roles, equality, and regional inequalities.

The Service Group will continue to press the Government to restore funding to ensure a healthier population. Proper funding would radically reduce the costs associated with poor health.

## **5.2 Scottish Joint Council Committee**

### **Pay campaigning**

Following the 2022 SJC pay campaign, the Scottish Local Government Committee (SLGC) considered all the feedback from branches, relevant data, the wider landscape across public services and lessons learned. All this was used as we developed and progressed the 2023 pay campaign. Some of our findings are below.

Whilst the Anti-Trade Union Act remains in its current form the position of the SLGC and the majority of our branches is that we can only carry out disaggregate ballots with selected groups (as part of a national pay campaign).

In the last ballot we selected schools, early years and waste workers. These groups were selected because they are very visible to the public and are potentially disruptive in areas where the Scottish Government have a direct say. We balloted 25,000 out of a membership of around (at that time) 80,000.

We requested and were granted a full take home pay strategy. This was appropriate, as selected group/s were taking action on behalf of the wider workforce. But it did

have other consequences, particularly at the end of the negotiations, regarding suspension of action and consultation.

Ballot papers were sent in a blue envelope which proved very successful for campaigning. It allowed activists involved in phone banking to make reference to the envelope; it was easily identifiable and generated new materials. There is still a barrier to members returning postal votes and we feel that this did improve returns.

During the campaign we emphasised the importance of member engagement, direct face-to-face conversation and telephone contact.

We recruited around 15,000 new members (a net gain of 7,000 after taking into account leavers) – which did impact the ballot outcomes as many joined mid-way or towards the end of the ballot timeframe.

We balloted 31 out of 32 branches – with nine reaching the 50% threshold (this represented around 45% of the overall member ballot). The nine branches were geographically spread and in some key areas that allowed us to proceed with action.

Overall the campaign was successful, resulting in an improved offer worth £600 million on the pay bill, compared to the initial offer which was worth around £110m to £120m.

We also made progress in securing the abolishment of the SSSC registration fees, benefitting members in early years, social care and social work.

In advance of the 2023 SJC pay campaign, branches were asked to prepare members for possible action, update members' details and create an Industrial Action Fund. Regional support was available to assist with this.

## **SJC Constitution**

The annual general meeting of the Scottish Joint Council took place in December 2022. UNISON delegates successfully supported long overdue changes to the Constitution which will now be based on trade union density, as well as other tidying up amendments to accommodate changes to local government structures. UNISON holds the Convenorship this year of the SJC with the appointment of Mark Ferguson.

### **5.3 Chief Officers & Senior Managers Committee**

The Chief Officers and Senior Managers Committee met regularly during 2022. All meetings of the committee were held online.

Throughout 2022, the work of UNISON members in Chief Officer and Senior Manager roles in dealing with the pandemic showed how indispensable they are to local government and the communities they serve. Often working long hours in stressful circumstances, our members showed leadership in dealing with the new responsibilities local authorities took on, while managing complex services and large

staff groups. This work highlighted a need that UNISON has long highlighted, for better work-life balance for members in senior roles.

## **Pay and conditions**

UNISON carried out a survey ahead of the pay claim being submitted which showed the extent of stress, excessive workloads and unpaid overtime that Chief Officers experience and how a fair pay offer needs to address these issues.

The Officers' Side of the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) submitted a pay claim for 2022 calling for "A substantial increase in rates of pay and all relevant allowances; taking into account private sector comparator pay rates and the cost of living crisis (as reflected in current 12-month inflation of 11.1 per cent)." In July the Employers' Side responded with a flat rate offer of £1,925 to be applied to all Chief Officer salaries and consolidated into basic rates of pay. This offer was the same as the offer for staff covered by NJC bargaining. UNISON's Chief Officers and Senior Managers Committee decided to consult members on the pay offer and 77% of members voted to accept the pay rise. This was implemented in most authorities in November 2022 and backdated to 1 April 2022.

In early 2023 the joint trade unions submitted a pay claim for Chief Officers calling for a pay rise of RPI plus 2% and calling for additional annual leave in line with the NJC pay claims for 2022 and 2023. The employers responded with an offer of 3.5% for all Chief Officers. Both UNISON and GMB have called for a meeting with the employers to see if an improved offer can be negotiated and, at the time of writing, the unions are waiting for a date to be agreed. The committee will then consider their next steps.

## **Mapping**

Work continued throughout 2022 to map out Chief Officer and Senior Manager membership within UNISON to ensure that records are as accurate as possible. It is hoped that this work will be completed in 2023.

### **5.4 Youth & Community Workers Committee**

The Youth and Community Workers Committee met four times in the past year.

The committee has gained two new members, increasing our representation across the nations by now having members from Cymru/Wales and Northern Ireland.

### **Pay, conditions and the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC Pay)**

The pay claim for 2021/22 was resolved in July 2022 after Unite, the lead union in JNC negotiations, took industrial action in some areas. The pay claim for 2022/23 was submitted in May 2022 and was finally settled in December 2022, with an

increase of £1925 on all spinal column points and a 4.04% increase on the London Area Allowances and Sleeping-In Duty Allowance, backdated to 1 September 2022.

Discussions are due to begin with the joint unions on the 2023/24 pay claim shortly, with an aim to achieve an offer to consult members on during the summer.

UNISON now sends one delegate each to the Education, Training and Standards (ETS) Committees for England and Wales.

## **Recruitment and organising**

Opportunities for recruitment and organising activity continue to be limited due to the impact of cuts and the pandemic on youth services and our members. However branches and regions continue to establish new ways to recruit and organise non-members.

In August 2022, UNISON submitted a Freedom of Information request to all British local authorities to establish how many had responsibility for youth and community services, the number of employees on JNC or NJC terms and conditions and the recruiting requirements for various youth and community posts. The majority (73%) of councils responded and provided UNISON with a comprehensive set of data that demonstrates the breadth of qualifications and experience that exists within the youth and community sector. The responses are currently under analysis and a summary report will be published shortly.

## **Cymru/Wales**

UNISON has continued to be involved in the work of the Interim Youth Work Board (IYWB) in Cymru/Wales. After the publication of the IYWB's final report in September 2021, the board's initial focus has been on establishing a young people led governance structure for youth work, strengthening the legislation, exploring the logistics of establishing a national body and undertaking an evidence-based funding review.

It is anticipated that this will set the foundation for the remaining recommendations in terms of delivery, including working together with the Welsh Government to promote equality, diversity and inclusion, increase the availability of youth work services in Welsh and supporting the Welsh Government to build on its commitment to support and develop the youth work profession.

## **5.5 Schools Committee**

### **UK**

#### **Violence in schools**

UNISON was part of ground-breaking analysis to look specifically at the scale of the violence and aggression faced by teaching and classroom assistants in England, Scotland and Wales. University of Roehampton criminologist Dr Amanda Holt led the qualitative research that involved in-depth interviews with 16 teaching and classroom

assistants. UNISON helped recruit the support staff who took part in the research. This report was covered on front page of the [Guardian website](#). To accompany the report, UNISON produced a model policy for tackling, and reducing the risk of, violence in schools and a template survey for organisers.

## **Teaching assistants**

UNISON commissioned a headline piece of research from Portsmouth University that showed the changing nature of the teaching assistant (TA) role following the pandemic and the scale of the recruitment and retention crisis engulfing schools due to low pay. This report gained very good press coverage – including on the front page of [Guardian website](#). UNISON also met with the Chartered College of Teaching who are opening up their membership to teaching assistants, with the aim of supporting their professional development.

## **Stars in our Schools**

With the risk of further government funding cuts, Stars in our Schools this year included specific messaging and campaign actions around school funding – in addition to the usual Stars activities. An event was held in Parliament in the run up to the day to highlight school funding pressures and the impact they are having on school staff along with the cost of living crisis.

A large number of celebration events took place across the UK to celebrate the vital contribution of school support staff to our children's education, with messages of support online from parents, schools and MPs. Record levels of coverage were achieved for the cost of living crisis survey released on the day with national, local and specialist press interest.

## **School funding**

We used Stars in our Schools to launch a new UNISON campaign on funding. In 2023 we developed plans for stepping up the campaign, including commissioning research schools funding gaps and producing campaigning and lobbying tools.

## **COVID**

We continued our campaign to get the Government to improve ventilation in all schools. This including writing an open letter to the Children's Commissioner who as a result agreed to take the issue up directly with the Secretary of State. We also continued to promote the Joint Unions' Long Covid protocol to employers and we submitted evidence to the TUC for inclusion in the Covid Enquiry submission relating to UNISON's work to protect pupils, staff and education.

## **Health and safety**

Working with the health safety unit and other unions we ran a high-profile media campaign calling on the Westminster government to urgently provide capital funding to make schools safe and fit for purpose. This campaign was in response to warnings from the Department for Education (DfE) that it had increased the risk of

some school buildings collapsing from “critical – likely” to “critical – very likely”. As part of the campaign we also continued to call for urgent action to be taken on the dangers of asbestos in schools. During the summer extreme heatwave we provided advice and guidance for schools on keeping pupils and staff safe. In the Winter we produced guidance on the measures to be taken to reduce the risk to children and staff posed by scarlet fever and streptococcal infections; this followed the very sad news that a number of children had died of invasive group A streptococcal infections (iGAS).

## **School meals**

In 2022 we set up a Facebook community page to allow school meals workers in UNISON to communicate with each other more. This has been well received by members and makes them feel more part of a ‘group’.

We worked with the University of Hertfordshire on a detailed piece of research on the working lives of school meals workers. We also linked up with many external stakeholders to promote increasing the entitlement to free school meals and this issue has received much positive press coverage.

Many catering staff have been affected by the Brazel judgement and claims are ongoing in several large caterers. Many low-paid (mainly female) staff have seen an improvement to their holiday pay as a result with some successful cases paying backpay to affected staff as well.

## **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

The UNISON website now contains a specialist section on SEND. New guidance for members who work in special schools and alternative provision has been produced that was due to be launched at the Schools Seminar in April 2023. Colleagues in Wales have already shared the guidance and it has been well received by members.

We submitted a response to the SEND Review Green Paper (England) and the resulting improvement plan shows a recognition of the need for more focus on teaching assistants as a vital part of the SEND workforce.

UNISON will be in a stronger position to work on special needs issues as a result of its acceptance onto the Special Education Consortium, a stakeholder group of 40 organisations with a large level of influence on the sector.

## **Term time only workers**

Following the employer’s appeal, UNISON continued to intervene and led the arguments in the UK Supreme Court in *Harpur Trust v Brazel & UNISON*. In July 2022 the UK Supreme Court agreed with UNISON and upheld the decision of the Court of Appeal that all part-year workers must be entitled to at least 5.6 weeks’ leave with no pro-rata reduction.

Since the judgment, we have been working with and advising colleagues in branches and regions to ensure that all employers that employ term-time only staff are abiding

by this decision. We have been particularly focusing on taking tribunal cases against private contractor employers where there have been instances of non-compliance.

Using this decision and the Part-Time Worker Regulations and employing a combination of legal action and negotiation, working with branches and regions, we have secured over £90m in back pay settlements for term-time only staff whose holiday entitlement and subsequently pay have been historically underpaid.

In January 2023, the government launched a consultation on changing the regulations for holiday pay for part-year, irregular- hours, and agency workers. These proposals could potentially amend the law in respect of statutory holiday entitlement for term-time workers and negate the decision of the Supreme Court in the *Brazel* case. The Government has estimated that this will cut the pay of part year workers by £113m per year. UNISON has vehemently opposed these changes and is committed to challenging any proposals that will cut the pay of these predominantly female staff.

We have sent further advice to branches on the additional day's leave that was awarded to all staff as part of the NJC settlement for 2022/23 and have been working with branches and MATs to ensure that all term time only staff benefit from the extra day's leave.

## **Techognition**

UNISON again sponsored this year's Techognition day, an annual event run by Preproom which champions the role of school science technicians. Technognition aims to demystify the role of technicians in schools and colleges and gain them better professional recognition by encouraging those in the job to upload photos to social media demonstrating to a hugely diverse range of tasks they carry out. All MPS, MSPs and AMs were contacted about the event to help raise awareness.

## **Schools seminar**

In 2022 UNISON held its first seminar for schools members and activists since before the pandemic. Delegates heard from Christina McAnea, General Secretary and Bridget Phillipson, Shadow Secretary of State for Education, and took part in sessions on a wide range of issues. Another seminar was set for April 2023.

## **National Education Union**

Following a large number of complaints from UNISON branches and regions about the conduct of the National Education Union (NEU), in October 2022 the three NJC unions (UNISON, GMB and Unite) submitted a complaint to the TUC about the NEU. The complaint focused on the NEU's attempts to impose themselves on local government / school support staff pay bargaining, and breaching the agreement they have previously signed on recruitment of school support staff. At the time of writing, a TUC panel had met to consider our evidence and to make a decision on our complaint, and we were awaiting the outcome of that process.

## **ENGLAND**

### **Academies**

Throughout the year we continued to negotiate in national multi academy trusts (MATs) overseen by the Schools Committee. We also produced template materials to support implementation of the NJC pay award in academies, and legal guidance to challenge any employers refusing to backdate the award.

### **MAT organising**

Following the passing of the organising in MATs motion at last year's conference we established a working group consisting of reps from the Schools and NJC committees and regional schools leads. The group worked on updating guidance to support organising work in MATs that cross branch and regional boundaries.

### **Living wage**

UNISON lobbied the Catholic Church and Church of England to meet their long-standing commitment to ensure all school staff in church schools are paid at least the real Living Wage. This included freedom of information requests, open letters to heads of the churches and a campaign lobby of the Church of England's Synod meeting. This pressure led to a commitment from the Church of England to work jointly with us to step up efforts to get all schools to pay the Living Wage.

### **Early years**

In July 2022, the DfE launched a consultation on amending the adult:child ratios for early years staff looking after 2 year olds from 1:4 to 1:5. The Government promised a response to the consultation in Autumn 2022. It was then announced as part of the March 2023 budget measures that the ratio changes would go ahead despite near-unanimous opposition to the changes in the consultation. The Government's own assessment of the early years workforce has found that stress and overwork are one of the main reasons that staff are leaving the sector and these changes are only likely to make this worse.

The March 2023 budget also included measures to increase the rights for subsidised care for children from the age of 9 months in England. While the additional investment in early years is welcome, there are severe concerns around whether the funding will be sufficient and whether there is enough capacity in the sector to deliver the extra places.

Many employers are reporting that there is a recruitment crisis in the sector. They say they are unable to recruit sufficient qualified staff. They report that staff are leaving the sector for better paid roles elsewhere. The funding provided by government for subsidised places for 2-4 year olds is insufficient and has not been addressed by the additional funding announced in the Budget. We have been working with other early years organisations to campaign to improve the funding and the pay and professional recognition of staff in the sector.



UNISON has been working with colleagues in NEU, NAHT and Early Education to campaign for additional funding for maintained nursery schools and in July 2022, the government announced that these schools would receive an additional £10m per year. Despite this, many maintained nursery schools are struggling financially and we have been supporting branches dealing with proposed cuts and closures.

## **CYMRU/WALES**

### **Schools Forum**

Attendance at the Cymru/Wales Schools Forum increased in 2023, due in part to meetings being held on a hybrid basis. The Forum has reviewed and updated the 2023 schools plan.

### **Cymru Wales Schools Seminar**

This year's seminar was held in January and was an enormously successful event. Speaker included Mark Drakeford, the First Minister, and Jeremy Miles, the Education Minister. Sessions covered violence at work, the workforce board and making schools LGBTQ+ friendly.

### **Schools Social Partnership Forum (SSPF) Support Staff Workshop Board**

UNISON continued to be the main union engaged in this exciting piece of work. The Workforce Board was set up to ensure that all recommendations of the Task & Finish Group Discussion Paper (2021) are actioned in an appropriate timescale. The Board will co-ordinate effective communication with all TAs across Wales, work with TAs to create updated job descriptions, and liaise with the Association of Directors of Education in Wales on TA job descriptions. A piece of work to create new job descriptions is under way to make them fit for purpose and relevant for schools in Wales.

### **Children & Young People's Education Committee (CYPEC)**

The Senedd's CYPEC asked UNISON for evidence on violence and sexual harassment towards staff in schools. Following a survey of members in Wales and the research already undertaken by UNISON we provided meaningful information and examples. Our research also enabled us to challenge the Welsh Local Government Association's response which painted a very different picture.

### **EWC**

Learning support worker registration with the Education Workforce Council (EWC) has continued to grow, with nearly 50,000 registrants in this category, which is 5,000

more than last year. UNISON worked with the EWC to examine whether there is work we can engage in to support recruitment into UNISON.

### **Additional learning needs (ALN) reforms**

The ALN Act and wider ALN Transformation Programme will transform the separate systems for special educational needs in schools and pupil referral units and create a unified system for supporting learners. UNISON engaged with the Welsh Government to assess progress and share exercises from the perspective of practitioners as this programme started to bed in.

## **SCOTLAND**

### **Work with government**

COVID still dominated our education work at the start of the year. UNISON Scotland represented members on the Scottish Government Covid Education Recovery Group (CERG) ensuring that members' voices were heard at the highest levels of pandemic response planning. The group was stood down in March and our Education Issues Group (EIG) moved back to its quarterly meeting schedule. Work continued to ensure safe working condition in schools and early years settings.

UNISON continued to play a role in a range of Scottish Government working groups and advisory groups, such as the Strategic Forum on the future of Scottish Education and the Scottish Education Council. Work had been paused in many of these areas and they began to regroup and review projects as the COVID work slowed. The Scottish Government is reviewing the whole education service partly due to an OECD report and issues highlighted by the COVID crisis particularly regarding exams. There are many proposals which impact on UNISON members including members in the Scottish Qualifications Authority, which is likely to merge with other bodies. The National Conversation Process will report early in 2023 and the government will respond to that. The current leadership election in the governing party mean that it is unclear what the next steps will be.

### **Campaigns**

Key issues for members were cuts to local government spending, and the impact on members' jobs. Tied to this are the impact of dysregulated behaviour on school support staff. Increasing reporting and reducing violence in schools will be a key part of our work in 2023. COVID delayed government proposals to review the role of pupil support staff in schools but this was restarted late in 2022. UNISON representatives sit on the two main working groups.

### **Early years**

The ELC expansion has now been fully implemented; as predicted the funding mechanism for the private, voluntary and independent sectors has affected the financial viability of many providers. They are lobbying hard to have local authorities removed from the process. Low pay remains an issue in this sector. Government funding only provides for the living wage for funded hours. The government has set

up a working group on fair work in the sector with UNISON representation. This work remains at a very early stage. Cuts to local authority budgets continue to impact on members, particularly on their ability to get support for children with ASN which leaves staff to deal with the consequences.

## **Recruitment and organising**

Education workers from 31 local authorities were balloted as part of last year's local government pay campaign. While action was averted (due to an acceptable pay offer), the organising efforts around the ballots increased face to face and digital contact across the education workforce. Membership grew by over 8500 and many new activists have been identified.

## **NORTHERN IRELAND**

Since schools reopened in September 2022, our bargaining and organising teams have worked to protect and secure employment rights and health and safety standards for our members who work as classroom assistants, and in school transport, cleaning, catering, estates and youth services. In particular we have focussed on the increased responsibility of supervisory staff in catering and cleaning without proper reward; the need for a framework recognition agreement with the ever growing integrated sector (all individual employers); growing concern around resources for youth services; and the implications of the Brazel judgment on the calculation of annual leave for term time workers.

Our Northern Ireland schools recruitment drive has been very successful. In 2022 we recruited 960 new members in the education sector. This is 140% higher than in 2021. We continue to get new employers to sign up to our project which offers new joiners the option when joining online of paying by either Direct Debit or DOCAS. Recruitment in this sector has benefited from the return to face to face recruitment activities, school visits and members' meetings. Recruitment primarily comes from the controlled sector, with 871 new members (91%) employed by the Education Authority (EA).

Growth has been driven by a very significant increase in the recruitment of classroom and nursery assistants. 664 have been recruited during 2022 to date - up 153% from the 262 recruited during the same period last year. 15% of our total recruitment during 2022 to date have been classroom or nursery assistants, compared with only 8% during the same period last year.

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

Our negotiating teams are engaging effectively with employers across all the Directorates in the Education Authority. We are also pushing ahead on the EA

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

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

In Northern Ireland our 'Free School Meals for All' campaign is a further important intervention aimed at reducing poverty for our members and their families. While development of a draft Anti-Poverty Strategy remains ongoing, in the absence of an Executive it cannot be publicly consulted upon and adopted. In the interim we continue to urge officials to move as swiftly as possible to progress the strategy's development. We hope a public consultation exercise will begin soon. During the consultation, our campaign will focus on maximising responses supporting a universal approach, and ensuring that our members and their families have the opportunity to have their voices heard.

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

## **5.6 FE & 6<sup>th</sup> Form Colleges Committee**

### **Pay**

In England, a pay recommendation was made in July 2022 for a consolidated uplift to all staff of 2.5% plus £750 unconsolidated for those earning less than £25,000, publishing a timeframe to commit to the Foundation Living Wage (FLW), and starting a workload group.

Following a consultation, the sector committee decided to contact those branches with a turnout of 40% or more and offer to co-ordinate any local action that was deemed necessary. This new strategy has given us a platform to build on in future years. We balloted for action locally in several colleges, resulting in increased local activism and improved offers that were subsequently accepted by members.

In Wales, a pay claim was submitted in June 2022 for a 12% pay increase. In December 2022 the joint trade unions agreed to accept a proposal from the employers' side in of an exceptional interim award of a 5% increase and to bring the increase in the FLW forward to 1 August. Feedback from members was that the payment was welcome, and the work done by the trade unions was appreciated. No

formal offer has yet been made by the employers' side and formal pay talks had not yet started at the time of writing.

In Scotland, a detailed pay claim with a headline ask of a £5000 uplift on all pay points was submitted in September 2022. In January 2023, the employers offered 2% across the board. This offer was rejected by all unions in the sector and further meetings have been scheduled. The branch anticipate no acceptable offer and the need for industrial action in May and are now working towards that.

In Northern Ireland, directly employed staff benefit from NJC pay, terms and conditions. The current offer of £1925 for all staff will be consulted on in 2023.

### **Industrial action**

No industrial action has taken place in colleges in the UK this year. A statutory ballot in Scotland on the 21/22 pay offer narrowly failed to meet the threshold, with a 48% turnout. Some colleges in England met the turnout in statutory ballots: Bristol, Plymouth and Wirral. In Wirral this led to a better offer that was accepted, however in Bristol and Plymouth potential action was undermined by UCU accepting slightly improved offers.

### **Policy and campaigns**

Campaigning this year focussed on the mental health motion that was passed at Local Government Conference. We have continued to promote our mental health guidance for organisers in colleges by producing materials on supporting workplace reps and extending the FE 'chinwag' to all reps. We have developed strong links with Citizens UK, with whom we are linking to jointly campaign for full funding for mental health counsellors in colleges and schools. As part of this work, we have representation on the Citizens UK general election strategy campaign group, we are running a mental health workshop for staff at the annual staff governors conference (for the second year running as the first one was very well received) and we are

running a fringe meeting at the 2023 Local Government conference on the mental health of staff.

The Champions in our Colleges event was extended nationally on 10 February after a successful trial in Northern region in 2022. Despite some setbacks caused by low staffing, the event received good pick-up. Merchandise was developed and bought by a respectable number of branches, the nominate-a-star competition received plenty of entries from every UK region and there was some activity on social media, particularly from Northern region. This good start gives us a strong platform to build on for 2023/24.

## **Meetings**

National meetings have taken place on five occasions. Representation of lay members continues to be low. We have two new FE reps from the East Midlands and Northern regions and a new rep for 6<sup>th</sup> form colleges (South East region) means that we now have a full quota (three) of 6<sup>th</sup> form college reps on the committee. However, we still have no representation at national level for the following regions: South West, Eastern and Northern Ireland. Of the remaining nine regions, only two have more than one representative.

## **Seminars and conferences**

The FE and sixth form colleges seminar took place this year. The event was held at UNISON Centre in November and despite a lot of promotion the two-day event only had nine registered delegates by the end of October. A decision was made to reduce the event to a one-day seminar which reduced costs to such an extent that we could put the event on for free. This resulted in a doubling of the number of delegates. Evaluation forms submitted by delegates showed an overwhelmingly positive response to the day and some constructive feedback on how we could make improvements.

At the 2022 Local Government Conference one motion was submitted, on supporting the mental health of staff in colleges. This motion was passed, and work has been taking place throughout the year to support this.

## **Guidance**

The following guidances and briefing notes have been produced this year to support organisers, activists and members in colleges:

- Colleges moving to a four-day week (briefing note)
- Low-paid workers in FE briefing for branches (briefing note)
- Term time only holiday pay calculations (guidance note)
- Mental Health – resources and links for reps (guidance note)

- College reclassification (briefing note for organisers)
- Behaviour guidance for staff working in specialist institutions (detailed guidance for members)

## **SIXTH FORM COLLEGES**

UNISON members in sixth form colleges accepted an offer worth 5.7% of the pay bill for 2022/23 which included additional increases for the lowest paid.

The NJC also agreed to set up a working party to review pay and grading arrangements in colleges. The working party will be particularly looking at issues relating to the use of job evaluation in colleges and the impact that the deletion of the lowest points in the pay spine has had on pay differentials in the sector. The working group is due to complete its work by September 2023.

Despite not being recognised for support staff in sixth form colleges, the National Education Union (NEU) decided to ballot their support staff members over the 2022/23 pay offer. This was included as part of our complaint to the TUC around NEU activity in schools.

### **5.7 Care Quality Commission (CQC) Committee**

UNISON members at the Care Quality Commission (CQC) voted for industrial action in March of 2023 following the imposition of a pay award of a basic pay rise of between 2.75 and 3.5% (dependent on grade), a 3% increase to allowances and a non-consolidated payment of £100 or £150 (dependent on grade). The organisation stated that this was the most they could pay due to the Government's civil service pay guidance. They attempted to secure permission to award staff significantly more but were unable to progress their business case.

Along with the other recognised trade unions at CQC (RCN, Prospect, PCS and UNITE) we balloted our members for industrial action after they overwhelmingly rejected the pay award in a consultation. UNISON members delivered a 67% turnout, with 73% voting for strike action and 92% for action short of strike. At the time of writing, UNISON's National Committee was considering action dates, in conjunction with the other unions.

UNISON's CQC Committee have held weekly all-member meetings throughout the pay campaign to build support for industrial action. We also carried out intensive data cleansing work ahead of the ballot. UNISON reps and staff were involved in phone banking and peer to peer texting to help maximise turnout. Work was also undertaken to identify a number of potential new reps from the wider membership who will hopefully become more involved in UNISON.

UNISON and the other joint trade unions at the CQC were also in formal dispute with the organisation over a botched restructure to the Operations Directorate that greatly angered our membership. The CQC is adopting a new regulatory approach and as a consequence wanted to make changes to the job roles of the workers who carry out inspections of health and care settings across the country, who make up the largest

staff grouping. However, from the outset the organisation failed to meaningfully consult with the trade unions or follow their own management of change policies and procedures. After much campaigning, including working with the shadow Labour Health team and the involvement of ACAS, the CQC has said they will change and adopt a more conciliatory approach. We are hopeful that this will lead to much improved outcomes for our members and consequently we are now no longer in formal dispute. The whole episode helped to increase our membership numbers by 25% since the start of the year.

## **5.8 Ofsted Committee**

UNISON members in Ofsted accepted a 3% pay offer for 2022/23. This was the maximum increase allowed by the civil service pay remit. The joint trade unions in Ofsted are working with the employer to agree a joint business case to go to Treasury for an increase beyond the civil service remit in 2023/24.

Excessive workloads continue to be an issue for UNISON members in Ofsted, particularly in social care and early years. The fall-out from the pandemic has created a backlog of inspections and many members have been working well in excess of their contractual hours. We are working with the employer to try and address the long hours working culture.

## **5.9 FSA / FSS Committee**

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) / Food Standards Scotland (FSS) sector committee has continued defending members' rights and fighting privatisation over the last year. During 2022, we fought successfully through targeted campaigning, public polling and a hugely successful petition to stop the privatisation of meat inspection yet again. The FSA proposals, named OTP or Operational Transformation Project, would have transferred responsibility for low-level inspection to the industry, potentially risking many of our members' jobs. This is not the first time the 'risk-based' model has been tried and failed. However, the danger of privatisation is not yet over. The bonfire of EU regulation in the form of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill is causing great alarm in both the FSA and the FSA/FSS Sector Committee. Work is underway to fight these changes, but if the Bill is not heavily modified, we could be left with few food regulations. Meat inspection laws come from the EU; without these regulations, our food and the jobs of our members working in meat inspection would be transferred to industry.

The 2022 pay award for members in the FSA was disappointing. We negotiated hard for a 10% pay rise and got half that amount for those members at civil service grade AO and EO. As a result, we balloted for strike action but narrowly missed the 50% threshold for industrial action. The Sector Committee will review whether to re-ballot our members in April. Sadly, due to the nature of the industry, there are only two periods in the calendar year where effective industrial action can take place – the summer and the weeks leading up to Christmas.

Our members working as Meat Hygiene Inspectors (MHI) at EO grade at the national and London FSA pay rates fall well below the national Annual Survey Hours and Earnings (ASHE) median. The national EO grade target earnings rate is 16.9%



below the April 2021 ASHE median, the London grade is 16.9% below the updated ASHE April 2021 median, and 7.5% behind the national median of £31,268.

As a result, the sector continues to press and campaign for the FSA to submit a business case to Treasury for an improved pay policy for all regulatory roles, such as MHIs and Official Veterinarians, and their support roles in the FSA.

In the coming year, we will be re-launching our Protect Our Food campaign starting with a special podcast by the much-respected former National Convenor, Ron Spellman. He was asked to talk about the history of meat inspection and UNISON's contribution to safeguarding it over the years. It will make exciting listening when available.

Finally, the Sector Committee would like to pay tribute to two outstanding convenors who retired from a long service on the Committee - Terry Shinton (West Midlands) and Martin Hope (North West). They gave outstanding support to their members and will be missed.

## **6. Occupational Groups**

### **6.1 Libraries and Cultural Services**

As local authority purse strings continue to tighten, the library sector continues to be hit hard by cuts, closures, the transfer of libraries to volunteers and communities, and the automation of services.

Analysis by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) shows that in Britain, spending on libraries has fallen by 17%, despite in-person visits increasing by 68% since the pandemic. This spring, CIPFA figures showed that in 2021/22, £9,982 was spent per 1,000 people on libraries by central and local government in England, Scotland and Wales. This was down from £11,970 in 2020/21 and £12,646 in 2018/19.

While digital participation in libraries may have skyrocketed since the pandemic, it is obvious that we must protect the physical space and the workforce that is fundamental to the delivery of a quality public library service.

Last winter, saw the advent of libraries as so-called 'warm banks' in response to the cost-of-living crisis. UNISON lobbied the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Libraries Connected around the risk this posed for spreading respiratory infections, such as COVID-19 and seasonal flu, as well as increasing instances of violence and abuse towards staff. UNISON provided guidance on ventilation and awareness of the need to consider staff safety. We were also able to feed into the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) guidance on warm banks and ensure that this included UNISON guidance on ventilation and awareness of the need to consider staff safety.

We further used our position – and strong lay involvement - in the DCMS Libraries Working Group to raise concerns about the pressure and risks library workers face due to low levels of staffing and high levels of sickness.

DCMS are currently developing a new library strategy and UNISON lobbied for frontline library workers to be able to feed into these discussions and attend events. Invitations to UNISON reps to attend these discussions have been forthcoming.

This year, UNISON has produced new library campaigning materials with fresh branding for branches and we are currently re-branding UNISON's Love Your Libraries campaign. This involves a refresh and re-launch of online and social media coverage.

UNISON also continues to work with The Library Campaign, distributing two editions of The Library Campaigner magazine every year to library members. In response to branch requests, we produced an extra two hundred copies of the magazine this winter. The magazine is the main source of news for our members working in libraries. It is vital that all UNISON members who would like a copy have access to one.

## **6.2 Social Work**

The Social Care Forum continued to prioritise social worker recruitment and organisation. Several regions have now set up social worker projects and/or regional social worker leads. In July 2022 we launched our annual campaign to recruit social worker students starting university degree courses in the UK. A new initiative for 2022 was that UNISON emailed, via the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), all 5000 students registered to begin social work courses. This email summarised the benefits of UNISON student membership and encouraged students to join us for £10 a year. Those joining UNISON received a 20% discount off essential social work textbooks purchased via Bloomsbury Academia. As a result of the campaign, we saw a 76% increase in social work student recruitment compared to 2021.

The 2023 campaign will be launched to branches and regions in early summer. We will repeat the UNISON email sent via UCAS and the books discount. We are also developing more digital resources, such as social media clips on why join UNISON to include in our recruitment presentations, and a new student recruitment booklet.

The Social Care Forum continues to build up our organisation and a national social work seminar is planned for later in 2023. This is for social worker stewards to come together to discuss organising and campaign issues and build regional networks.

The Health and Community Service Groups will be invited to send social worker stewards to this seminar.

In our 2022 social worker survey, members expressed considerable concern about the lack of time, opportunity, resources and financial support available to them to carry out and record their Continuing Professional Development (CPD). We therefore expanded our training website for UNISON social work members. This offers access to hundreds of courses - many of which contribute social workers' CPD. Most of these courses are free to UNISON members and others are discounted.

The Social Care Forum continues to be concerned about the high levels of pressure and work-related stress amongst social workers and is campaigning to get employers to tackle the causes and improve workplace cultures. The Forum agreed to push the Standards for Employers of Social Workers as a way of improving the workplace culture, with its accompanying 'health check' survey for employers to survey their social workers on how their working conditions match up to the Standards. We recognise there is a capacity issue for branches engaging with employers on the annual health checks. However, the Standards provide a whole system approach to managing workload pressures and we encourage branches to engage and follow up the findings with their employers.

We also urged the Department of Education (DfE) to advocate a more meaningful use of the Standards and health check. DfE has set up a group to develop the questions and shape the future health check. UNISON is represented on this group.

Government plans to reform children's social care in England were published in February 2023 in response to recommendations made to it last year by the Independent Review of Children's Social Care (the McAlister Review) and the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's review into the deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson.

The Government's implementation strategy, called Stable Homes, Built on Love, was launched together with specific consultations on a national framework and their proposal to introduce national rules for local authorities on engaging agency staff. UNISON is critical of the strategy. While the plan aims to address the serious gaps in the system, the funding attached is a drop in the ocean compared to what is needed to keep children and families safe.

The main points in the Government's strategy in terms of the workforce are:

- 12 pathfinders to trial the introduction of family help services and multi-agency teams to carry out child protection work
- Family Support Workers to have a greater role by inclusion as Family Help Workers
- A five-year early career framework for social workers
- 500 social work apprenticeships

- National rules for local authorities in engaging agency staff
- Regional care co-operatives to run fostering services and children's homes
- Children's residential workforce to be professionalised

The Government rejected the Care Review recommendations to establish national pay scales. Instead, DfE will work with the sector to increase pay transparency – ensuring current pay rates, job descriptions and grading reflect the challenge of the role and career progression.

UNISON will be responding to the government's consultation on its strategy and conducting an online survey for members to inform our response.

The Care Review also called for the reduction of unnecessary bureaucracy and workload. The DfE has set up a National Workload Action Group to consider these issues at all levels, including policy and regulation driven work. UNISON is represented on this group.

UNISON is also represented on Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) Professional Practice Workforce Sub-group, whose purpose is to provide a strategic professional focus to issues affecting the workforce that undertake statutory functions on behalf of Adult Social Care within local authorities. ADASS has also set up a steering group to develop ideas to promote flexible working for social workers, to improve recruitment and retention. UNISON is a member of the steering group.

Monthly meetings with officers of the professional regulator Social Work England (SWE) are held to discuss policy and practice. As a key stakeholder in the sector, UNISON also met separately during the year with DfE and the Professional Services Association to give feedback on how we work with SWE and how we think SWE is performing in its role as regulator. While stressing that we work collaboratively with SWE and have positively influenced policy changes, we raised several continuing concerns including:

- Lack of equality data about registrants
- Registrants not knowing a fitness to practice issue has been raised if it is closed at triage
- Interim Orders being scheduled after a long period without new facts
- Virtual Hearings v In Person Hearings – lack of guidance
- Registrants having to pay for medical reports

- Short response time to initial fitness to practice concerns
- Transparency on Board papers
- Yearly registration renewal – unlike other social work regulators who require renewal at two to three years

As part of renewing their registration, SWE requires social workers to provide two pieces of CPD, one of which must be peer reflected. Social workers on full time release to UNISON may not have access to a peer and so we ran a special webinar to help them meet SWE requirements.

Social work issues in Scotland and Cymru/Wales are outlined in their separate nation sections of the annual report.

### **6.3 Social Care**

UNISON has continued to prioritise social care over the last 12 months, with officers from the Local Government Service Group playing a key part in the union's cross-service group response to the crisis and routinely raising our members' key concerns with senior civil servants.

We have been involved in the fledging Social Care National Partnership Forum which is an attempt to replicate the Social Partnership Forum in the NHS. It brings together unions, the Local Government Association and care provider representatives. The group has only met twice so far but we are hopeful that it will gain more prominence and greater engagement with the Department of Health and Social Care.

UNISON has continued to engage with Southwark Council about getting care home operators in the borough to adopt our Residential Care Charter. Trying to get councils to influence pay and conditions in the care home sector has proved to be far more challenging than doing so in the homecare sector but we are hopeful that other councils will be able to follow in Southwark's footsteps.

Two more large councils in Greater London (Westminster and Lambeth) have announced that they will be adopting our Ethical Care Charter as part of their budget plans for 2023/24. Greater London has seen the largest take-up of the Ethical Care Charter to date.

UNISON Scotland has been ramping up its campaigning work against the Scottish Government's ambitions for a National Care Service that would see local councils stripped of their responsibility for delivering social care services across the country. The region recently team up with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) to highlight how the proposals to centralise control of care services could result in job losses and years of upheaval in the system. They jointly called for the Scottish Government to redraw their plans to ensure that local democratic accountability and the needs of local communities are at the heart of them. Regional Secretary Tracy Dalling recently gave evidence to the Scottish Parliament calling for the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill to be withdrawn. UNISON

Scotland have highlighted how it will lead to 75,000 staff being taken out of council employment and the major impact that will have on their pension provision. The Scottish Government have given no assurances over what will happen to care workers' pensions and whether they will be safeguarded. The National Care Service Bill is still being scrutinised by the Scottish Parliament at the time of writing.

*UNISON Cymru/Wales is working closely with the Welsh Government via the social work forum to improve the terms and conditions for care workers in the country.*

*UNISON is launching a major campaign for a National Care Service in the spring. Focusing on the provision of social care across England it will call upon the Westminster Government to provide a publicly funded and publicly delivered care service where the terms and conditions of care workers are markedly improved. UNISON has also been working with the Fabian Society, carrying out a major project on developing a road map to a National Care Service. It is hoped that the project will be in a position to publicise its findings in the coming months.*

## **6.4 Housing**

UNISON is the largest UK union for housing workers – in local authorities, arms length management organisations (ALMOs) and housing associations. Members in the Local Government Service Group working in council housing services (and in ALMOs) continue to face a challenging working environment, amid an ever-shrinking supply of social housing and a growing list of people who desperately need homes. With other support services continuing to shrink, housing workers find themselves providing an array of 'extra' support to their tenants - in addition to their day job. This can range from debt advice and support, to dealing with anti-social behaviour, or offering support to those with mental health issues.

As a public sector trade union, we also know that workers across our entire membership are struggling due to the housing crisis – with housing consistently ranked by them as a major concern, worsened by the current cost of living crisis.

UNISON carried out a member-wide housing survey during the winter of 2022/23, focusing on the cost-of-living crisis and how this was compounding the existing housing crisis for our members across the UK. The survey received over 2,600 member responses. The largest group of respondents were members working for local authorities - including schools (46%).

Headline findings from the survey included 40% of respondents saying that their household income had been reduced, 23% were worried about losing all or some of their income and 59% were spending less on food and essential. The survey found there were more renters (48%) than homeowners (45%) among respondents, and of those who were renters, 61% had no plans/delayed plans or had given up on getting a mortgage.

UNISON is carrying out parliamentary engagement work using the results and commissioning further analysis to form the basis of a future webinar for members. Editorial content is being produced for U Digital magazine, the UNISON website and for social media.

The UNISON housing forum meets twice a year and is comprised of members working in the council housing/ALMO sector from across all regions. Key issues raised by forum reps over the last year included: changes to social housing regulation and the increased pressure this puts on housing services, ongoing reduction in the provision of social housing and the challenge this has created for housing services, the recruitment crisis in the sector and the shift away from local, neighbourhood housing offices to central, online/telephone only services.

The Social Housing Regulation Bill (introduced June 2022) aimed to drive up safety standards and increase the performance and accountability of social landlords. UNISON felt that the Bill's proposed regulatory system would come at a cost to council housing providers and place further financial burdens on them – requiring social landlords to appoint new staff, including a named individual responsible for health and safety in all social homes. In addition to responding to the government consultation on this Bill, UNISON provided a briefing for MPs and other stakeholders, setting out our comments and concerns.

The Government announced plans to extend the existing Right to Buy (RTB) in 2022, allowing those on low incomes to use housing benefit money to purchase their home. UNISON criticised the proposal, with reps on the housing forum pointing out that those on the very lowest incomes would be unlikely to meet lenders' criteria for mortgages anyway. UNISON believes RTB should be suspended in England (as it has been in Scotland and Wales) to protect existing stock for current and future generations – not extended (In Northern Ireland, there is an equivalent scheme called the House Sales Scheme).

## **6.5 Careers**

The Careers Forum has continued to meet virtually, although many regions did not nominate members to attend.

The Careers Forum discussed the fact that the careers workforce has now been scattered across a large number of employers, including many individual schools where posts are combined with other duties, including teaching. Work has been done to map UNISON's careers membership to carry out the Forum's action plan.

In 2022 the Careers Forum members considered a Skills Council report, and in December they commented on the Careers England Workforce recruitment and retention report. The Forum's views were fed into a meeting between UNISON and the Chief Executive of the Careers & Enterprise Company.

In the coming year, the Forum plan to continue to meet virtually. A key objective is to build on the mapping work carried out in 2022 to develop member engagement via direct member emails, social media and a webinar later in the year, as well as developing connections with leaders in the careers sector and commenting on more careers policy initiatives in the lead-up to the next general election.

## **6.6 Craftworkers**

UNISON is not a recognised union for Craft Worker bargaining and negotiating, however a number of UNISON members still belong to the Craft bargaining group.

In August 2022, agreement was finally reached on the pay award for local authority Craftworkers, covering the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. This included (from 1 April 2021) 1.75% on basic salary and allowances, backdated for employees who left employment since 1 April 2021.

In November 2022, Agreement was reached on pay from 1 April 2022, including a flat rate increase of £1,925 on basic salary and 4.04 per cent on allowances.

Craft workers belonging to UNISON shared some frustration that their 21/22 pay award and subsequent 22/23 award were settled within months of each other, because their NJC colleagues' pay award for 21/22 was settled far sooner.

The Local Government Service Group continues to look at ways in which our Craft membership can be supported, despite UNISON not being a recognised union for Craft Worker bargaining/negotiating.

For branches who wish to undertake local benchmarking, UNISON is developing resources based on a number of craftworker roles, determining typical pay and allowances for these roles and demonstrating how they compare with similar NJC roles.

UNISON will also continue to survey UNISON Craft members, to better understand how UNISON can support them as members (while recognising that UNISON's preferred outcome is for all Craft workers to eventually transition to NJC pay, term and conditions).

## **6.7 Fire and Rescue**

### **Recruitment and organising**

The Fire and Rescue Forum met three times in the past year. The forum contributed their views to the unions' response to the government's proposals for reforming the fire and rescue service, discussed below. The forum also finalised a strategy for the 2022-24 committee cycle to improve the recruitment and representation of fire and rescue members across UNISON.

In Spring 2023, UNISON will launch a new circular for fire and rescue members to raise awareness of the forum and encourage more participation from fire and rescue members locally and regionally.

### **FBU strike action**

The Fire Brigades Union announced its intention to take strike action in January 2023. UNISON provided support and advice to our members who were concerned about pressure from employers to cover striking colleagues. UNISON also prepared



further advice for members in the event the strike action went ahead. However, the action was suspended by FBU in February 2023 after receiving an improved pay offer from employers, which was subsequently accepted by FBU members.

## **Campaigning and policy**

In June 2022, the Government launched a White Paper, 'Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service'. The White Paper and following consultation sought views on government plans to widen the role of firefighters and transfer governance of fire and rescue services to directly elected individuals such as Police and Crime Commissioners and mayors.

UNISON responded to this consultation, highlighting the impact this would have on our members and opposing any proposals that would merge support staff roles in police and fire and rescue or infringe on the right of fire and rescue staff to take industrial action.

The Government also announced plans to introduce minimum service levels for fire and rescue services during industrial action as part of a wider attack on public sector workers' right to strike. UNISON is strongly opposed to the proposals in the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill and the consultation. The forum has shared its views on the bill and the consultation, which will be included in UNISON's response.

## **7. Regional Service Group Reports**

### **7.1 Eastern**

It's hard to believe we entered 2022 still in lockdown. For some, the pandemic may feel like a chapter from our history books, but it wasn't until February 2022 that we saw a true relaxing of the Covid rules and the return to some semblance of normality. Of course, things had changed for many members; things rarely used before the pandemic like home working, hybrid working and Teams chats are now part of our everyday life.

But in typical UNISON style we have risen to the challenge and adapted. If you need evidence of that then look no further than the recruitment stats from 2022. Nationally UNISON ended 2022 in net growth of 3,859, with UNISON Eastern contributing a net growth of 332 to that. It's worth highlighting and congratulating a few of our stand-out local government successes on a job well done: Cambridge City and South, Peterborough City, Norfolk County, Stevenage Local Government, Thurrock UNISON, Watford Borough, and Yare Valley UNISON.

Local government pay took many by surprise in 2022: our national claim for a consolidated £2,000 or RPI inflation on all pay points was for once considered seriously by the employers, who offered £1,925 on NJC scales, which members accepted. Campaigning around pay saw Suffolk County, East Suffolk, Ipswich, and Central Suffolk join forces to hold pay events across their sites.

But with the cost-of-living crisis taking root, branches did not rest on their laurels, ensuring local pay claims in non-NJC councils followed suit, with South Cambridgeshire District Council awarding not only £1,925, but the Real Living Wage and a £500 retention payment to depot staff.

Colchester Council staff had initially accepted a low percentage rise, but as the cost of living began to bite, UNISON Essex persuaded the council to reopen negotiations, aided by the threat of industrial action, and won a £1,925 uplift backdated to April.

These excellent local pay campaigns were win-win for the branches: more money for members, more workers joining a dynamic UNISON and more activists getting involved.

There was another textbook case of this in East Suffolk Norse, where refuse and cleansing workers waged a hard-fought battle that saw their numbers swell, new stewards emerge and – most impressively – a 23% rise for the lowest paid. On top of this, workers won improved sick pay, an extra day's annual leave and a commitment to secure full-time roles for interested agency staff.

Elsewhere, Cambridgeshire County branch activists won recognition at Huntingdonshire District Council. It's been more than 20 years since the council recognised a union and UNISON is reaping the benefit, with growing membership numbers, new stewards signing up and the start of the first pay campaign in decades.

Cambridgeshire County branch also unleashed ferocious negotiations on East Cambridgeshire Street Scene, securing pay rises of up to 19%, an extra 2% employer salary contribution, contractual sick pay from day one, more annual leave, enhanced parental leave and a commitment to keep improving terms and conditions.

In Peterborough City Council, the branch secured a local pay agreement which benefitted social workers operating the out of hours roster. This roster was once voluntary but had become mandatory and onerous without any change to their contracts or, more importantly, their salaries.

So, what can we take from 2022? It was a reminder that local campaigns and local disputes produce results, including better pay, increased membership and more activists.

Some of the biggest winners last year had suffered declining memberships in 2021. They had been spurred into action to turn things around. Where we are active and visible on a local level we are seen as strong by staff and the employer. We shouldn't be afraid of disputes or even industrial action. They are tools of negotiation just like any other.

## **7.2 East Midlands**

### **Cuts and redundancies**

Branches across the East Midlands continued to support members with collective issues arising from restructures and changes at work. Derbyshire County Council closed seven council-run homes for the elderly in 2022. This was followed by a proposal to close 6 out of 10 adult day centres. Concerningly, the Council took the decision to close the homes before the consultation concluded and despite the branch's campaign against it. Derbyshire County Council have also recently voted to raise council tax by the lowest percentage of any two-tier authority in the UK (3.75% against a possible maximum of 5%), increasing the chance of the need for further cuts.

In Nottingham City Council there is a widely reported financial shortfall which has led to scrutiny of the council spend which is leading to drastic changes in the services provided. The Council has lost large sums of money in the collapse of Robin Hood Energy, roughly £38m, as well as almost £3 million amid the liquidation of the Nottingham Castle Trust and around half of the £18m invested in the Broadmarsh site after shopping centre owners Intu entered administration in 2020. They have proposed a reduction in their workforce, changed how social care is operated, and reviewed all grants provided to community centres and groups.

Derby City Council opened up voluntary redundancy to all as the authority was faced with significant financial deficits with a forecast budget gap of £34 million. In December the Council confirmed they would be cutting 162 full-time equivalent posts to help balance the budget. UNISON locally are currently involved in "Achieving Change" processes across all council directorates. The branch's ability to negotiate and support members has in some areas reduced the job losses but overall 100 jobs are expected to be lost.

### **Pay and conditions**

Local Government branches in the East Midlands have been working to support members with the implementation of NJC pay and also the outcome of the Harpur v Brazel Claim. In Nottinghamshire County Council there are ongoing difficulties with academy schools paying NJC pay to staff who previously transferred from the local authority and in Derbyshire County Council there was local challenge when the Council failed to implement the 2022 pay award in full. The Harpur v Brazel ruling should have led to a pay increase (including back pay) for hundreds of 'part year' workers in schools, but some schools in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire County Councils did not implement it in 2022 and are now refusing to pay any back pay.

In Leicester City Council the local branch are supporting members with a current industrial action ballot request for members working at Ash Field School Trust connected with pay negotiations.

## **Privatisation and service delivery issues**

There is reported difficulty in recruitment of staff in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire whereby they are leaving for better pay and conditions in other local areas. This impacts on service delivery and adds strain to members working primarily in adult and children's social care.

In Nottingham City Council, the financial mismanagement has led to huge worries about the future of community services and whether further services will be privatised or stopped. Smaller councils in the region, such as South Derbyshire District Council, are struggling to continue with service delivery where ideological decisions not to raise council tax have been taken which has led to a shortfall in council budgets.

Community run libraries in Derby City Council are under threat of being disbanded. The branch have successfully managed to convince the Council to retain some of the libraries in council control whilst a full review is undertaken.

## **Recruitment and organising**

A wide range of member engagement work is ongoing in 2023. Nottinghamshire County Branch have started their plans for twice weekly workplace walkabouts and drop-in sessions following on from their popular "walk and talk" sessions with members in 2022. Activity in Leicester City is underway as the branch campaign to support members with pay issues in schools.

Stars in our Schools across the region was a huge success. The Hidden Hero Awards saw 12 people celebrated for being our Hidden Heroes and Stars in Our Schools and work is being undertaken to increase activity in schools with a new BSOF project across the region working on regional and national target branches.

### **7.3 Greater London**

#### **Cuts and redundancies**

The impact of the long-term funding crisis continues to be felt in all local authorities (LAs) and schools where restructures and redundancies have taken place or are anticipated. We anticipate the situation to worsen over the coming year as LAs have to consider which services they are able to deliver and where further cuts may have to be made. Training sessions on dealing with restructures and redundancies for activists will be available to branches. Previous cuts have seen us lose many long-standing experienced activists and we continue to recruit as many new activists as possible to support our members going forward. For example, in Hackney, an industrial action ballot took place among library staff involving 63 members, in relation to proposed compulsory redundancies of up to 19 full-time equivalent posts (potentially 44 individuals) and changes to terms and conditions including changes to job roles and grades, staff to become peripatetic and no guarantee of managers on site. With a 65% turnout, notice was given and strike action took place for three days in January and two in February. Three members remain at risk of redundancy with the dispute still live.

## **Pay and conditions**

We are fully engaged in the Greater London Employment Forum (GLEF) and Greater London Provincial Council (GLPC) and have agreed a number of initiatives. Pre-Covid we agreed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the Employment Service Passport which recognises the vital role that staff play in delivering high-quality public services and seeks to retain that employment within public services. The aim of the Passport is for different employers in the NHS and local government (who are signed up to the MoU) to recognise portability of accrued continuous and reckonable service when moving between employer organisations covering contractual annual leave in excess of statutory annual leave, occupational sick pay, occupational maternity pay, occupational shared parental leave pay and notice pay. The GLPC meeting later in the year will consider incorporating this into the London Agreement.

We are also looking at areas such as reducing violence at work and utilising UNISON's charter. In respect of Term Time Only (TTO) claims, we saw payments to council employees on TTO contracts swiftly completed in 2021, however payments to members in schools have been bogged down with delays leading to the terms of our collective agreement on individual settlements being revised. In Waltham Forest, a percentage increase to all outstanding settlements has been negotiated in recognition of the adverse impact the delays in payment have had and the Council have committed to strongly recommend that academy schools adopt the terms of the Agreement. In October 2022 Hammersmith and Fulham agreed in principle to a TTO settlement of five years and six months back dated to April 2022. The Agreement will (as agreed elsewhere) include compensation payments for those members who were in the Local Government Pension Scheme prior to March 2014, and ex-employees formerly employed on TTO contracts. Negotiations to finalise the details of a Collective Agreement will begin in January 2023.

In Barnet, a further industrial action ballot took place in August over The Barnet Group (TBG)'s treatment of a member in the Responsive Repairs department who suffered an injury at work but whose contract did not provide for sick pay. The dispute was about TBG refusing to make a payment to the member to relieve financial difficulties suffered as a result of an injury at work and subsequent time off. ACAS talks took place but with the employer unwilling to move, action started on 17 October and continued until the employer again offered ACAS talks which resulted in a settlement to the member and a joint statement bringing an end to the dispute.

In Southwark Veolia an industrial action ballot took place on a dispute around workload and breach of task and finish rules. 52 members were involved resulting in a 57% turnout with 100% voting for strike action. Negotiations continued to take place during the balloting period which resulted in the employer agreeing to all demands and therefore the trade dispute was resolved without the need for strike action to take place.

## **Privatisation and service delivery**

In Barnet, an industrial action ballot took place in March over TBG's plans to either TUPE staff in Barnet Homes Assist (telecare service) to the private sector or close it. The ballot saw a 77% turnout with 100% voting for strike action. At the point of the ballot result, TBG confirmed they had decided not to proceed and that outsourcing was abandoned due to a lack of a suitable bidder and that no changes were likely in the immediate future.

We continue to seek agreement from councils to sign up to the Ethical Care Charter and take action on improving the pay, conditions and working lives of care workers delivering home care services commissioned by their councils.

## **Recruitment and organising**

2021's downward trend had continued into 2022. Whilst local government in the region continues to recruit the most members, we also suffer the greatest losses. All local and area organisers continue to support current and new stewards. Many branches ran events or initiatives for the Cost-of-Living Campaign Fortnight in October 2022 which resulted in a positive spike in recruitment, with the first month of the year with local government in net growth. A brief analysis showed that the Cost-of-Living Fortnight made a real difference to recruitment figures and raising the profile of UNISON in workplaces and we must build on this experience into 2023 to continue our growth.

### **7.4 Northern**

#### **Cuts and redundancies**

Councils have faced significant budget pressures in the past year due to lack of funding, inflation and high energy prices. As part of their medium-term financial plans the 12 local authorities in the region identified a combined shortfall of £86.5 million in their 2023/24 budgets. The highest of these were Northumberland (£17.5 million), Middlesbrough (£15 million) and Gateshead (£14.5 million). Fortunately, there are no wide-spread compulsory redundancies proposed for this year as councils have been using a combination of reserves and vacancy deletions to achieve the majority of savings. This, however, is clearly not sustainable.

There is concern that two leisure centres in Gateshead were proposed to close but plans have been paused to allow for extra consultation and consider alternative options. Middlesbrough Council are also proposing cuts to frontline neighbourhood services, which the branch has been challenging.

#### **Pay and conditions**

The region has completed mapping of councils to benchmark terms and conditions across the North East and utilise this data to negotiate improvements. Encouraging more councils to become an Accredited Living Wage employer is a key priority and of the 12 councils in the region, Sunderland and Newcastle are now accredited

following political lobby efforts through Labour Link. Gateshead Council and others in the region have also support UNISON's motion on fair pay.

To assist branches the region again conducted the NJC consultation ballots for September 2022. Through use of Movement and text contact with members, five out of 12 branches achieved over 50% turnout.

In terms of Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), the region is continuing to compile evidence of NJC conditioned Trusts and are collating data on service level agreements in order to push for in-house or local authority contracts. Approaches have also been made to targeted MATs about Accredited Living Wage status.

### **Privatisation and service delivery issues**

There have been no large-scale privatisations within the North East over the last year. Two large MATs have brought private catering contacts in house, which has been supported by UNISON. Branches also successfully lobbied another MAT not to transfer staff to a private cleaning contract this year and retain their in-house / council contracts.

### **Recruitment and organising**

Branches have detailed quarterly recruitment plans and engage in several intensive recruitment weeks throughout the year. The region has launched an overarching education organisation plan together with specific projects in Northern Education Trust and Early Years. There will be a specific BSOF project starting this year within the five Catholic MATs in the region that will cover 188 schools.

There has also been high engagement in national campaigns such as Stars in Our Schools, Champions in our Colleges, and Local Service Champions. The increased presence in colleges has seen a growth in membership and reps in this area. In addition, there is a specific recruitment project within social work, with student social work events being particularly successful in Durham.

The region wide 'Get Active Plan' continues to mentor new and existing activists to support branches address increasing workloads and grow the union. The Regional Schools Forum has been very active and held a successful seminar for support staff in February.

## **7.5 Northern Ireland**

Since schools reopened in September 2022, our bargaining and organising teams have worked to protect and secure employment rights and health and safety standards for our members who work as classroom assistants, and in school transport, cleaning, catering, estates and youth services. In particular we have focussed on the increased responsibility of supervisory staff in catering and cleaning without proper reward; the need for a framework recognition agreement with the ever growing integrated sector (all individual employers); growing concern around resources for youth services; and the implications of the Brazel judgment on the calculation of annual leave for term time workers.

Our Northern Ireland schools recruitment drive has been very successful. In 2022 we recruited 960 new members in the education sector. This is 140% higher than in 2021. We continue to get new employers to sign up to our project which offers new joiners the option when joining online of paying by either Direct Debit or DOCAS. Recruitment in this sector has benefited from the return to face to face recruitment activities, school visits and members' meetings. Recruitment primarily comes from the controlled sector, with 871 new members (91%) employed by the Education Authority (EA).

Growth has been driven by a very significant increase in the recruitment of classroom and nursery assistants. 664 have been recruited during 2022 to date - up 153% from the 262 recruited during the same period last year. 15% of our total recruitment during 2022 to date have been classroom or nursery assistants, compared with only 8% during the same period last year.

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

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

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

In Northern Ireland our 'Free School Meals for All' campaign is a further important intervention aimed at reducing poverty for our members and their families. While development of a draft Anti-Poverty Strategy remains ongoing, in the absence of an Executive it cannot be publicly consulted upon and adopted. In the interim we continue to urge officials to move as swiftly as possible to progress the strategy's development. We hope a public consultation exercise will begin soon. During the consultation, our campaign will focus on maximising responses supporting a universal approach, and ensuring that our members and their families have the opportunity to have their voices heard.



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

## **7.6 North West**

### **Cuts and redundancies**

Local government funding remains woefully inadequate with pressure on the budgets of local authorities and schools. Local authority finance settlements were generally a bit better than expected, however when factoring in inflationary pressures and increased costs there are significant financial challenges. It remains a miracle that some local authorities in the North West continue to function despite their low council tax bases relative to other areas of the country.

North West branches continue to resist and campaign against cuts to jobs and services. The situation will not improve until there is a fair funding settlement and local authorities and schools are fully funded based on their need. In the meantime levelling up monies give a high street a facelift, which may allow Conservative MPs fearful of losing their seats at the next election to put something in their election leaflets, but it will do nothing to improve public services.

### **Pay and conditions**

NJC pay remains the top priority in the North West. As a trade union it is critical that we are able to deliver decent pay rises for our members. The current record rates of inflation have shone a spotlight on how awful pay in local government has become. The 2022 flat rate pay increase of £1925 was another real terms pay cut for all members. The offer was perhaps better than expected but should have come as no surprise given the national minimum wage increases required an increase of around £1 an hour at the bottom end of the pay spine (noting that 37 multiplied by 52 is 1924). There is a similar situation with 2023 pay despite the deletion of spinal column point 1. Will 2023 be another year of record profits for energy companies and record real terms pay cuts for local government workers? Members will decide that in the ongoing industrial action ballot.

There is clear empirical evidence that well thought out campaigning and industrial action over pay can result in significant recruitment and organisation of members. Local government workers will join where UNISON shows it is being proactive. A key area of work for the service group in the region is improving our membership data to improve ballot readiness.

In Cumbria there has been a significant reorganisation of local government with the County Council and District Councils being replaced by two new Unitary Councils. There have been the inevitable issues around the mix of terms and conditions and job evaluation.

## **Privatisation and service delivery issues**

The North West region has launched an insourcing project. So far work has focused on freedom of information requests to local authorities to obtain details of outsourced services that are potential targets for a campaign to insource. This project has the potential to begin to reverse years of outsourcing failures.

The region also continues to resource work in the outsourced social care sector and build on significant victories where local authorities have agreed to ensure staff on commissioned care contracts receive at least the real living wage.

## **Recruitment and organising**

Overall in 2022 there was a disappointing net loss of members within the North West Local Government Service Group despite branches' efforts. However the start of 2023 saw net growth within the North West Service Group. It is hoped to sustain this with a high profile NJC pay campaign and local branch activities and campaigning. In addition some of the new BSOF resources are being deployed within local government branches.

## **Schools**

The Regional Schools Forum continues to assist branches in dealing with academisation. More and more schools are now unfortunately looking to convert, particularly amongst the faith schools, with schools directed to convert and join new multi-academy trusts (MATs) on the say so of the relevant religious leadership in that area. A strategic approach is being taken to seek to resist academisation where possible and also to ensure UNISON continues to be recognised for collective bargaining for support staff. It is a challenge but also an opportunity to recruit and organise members. Regionally there have been resources put into a specific MATs project to support this work.

Considerable work has also been ongoing to ensure that term time only calculations for holiday entitlements are correct across the region. Issues are still being uncovered within private companies operating within schools and where possible this is pursued whilst noting the Government are seeking to vary the law in this area.

## **7.7 Scotland**

### **National Care Service**

We have continued to campaign for the Scottish Government to withdraw their current proposed National Care Service Bill. This is not because we object to a National Care Service, quite the contrary, but what is outlined in the current bill is so flawed and far removed from what any of us would wish to see in the construct of a national care service that we do not believe the current bill is salvageable. It would lead to 75,000 workers being taken out of local government with all the potential consequences on their terms and conditions, pensions and future working arrangements that this would invoke.

## **International relations**

In February we met with a delegation of 28 local authority chief executives from France, organised by the Università di Roma Tor Vergata.

It was a fascinating afternoon - the delegation wanted to understand how local government is structured in Scotland, what the main issues are, the recruitment process for local authority workers, differences in terms and conditions across authorities, the relationship with COSLA and the Scottish Government, the impact of political differences on councils and with the Scottish Government, how industrial relations were managed and how unions organised.

They were surprised to learn that there is no specific employment protection for these public sector workers and could not understand why there would be a need to transfer 75,000 local government workers out of local government into a National Care Service - we had to admit that neither did we!

## **Local government finance**

We are currently collating information from branches about what individual local authorities' budget announcements will mean for proposed cuts, council tax rises and staffing.

Analysis of the Scottish Government's local government budget settlement by the Scottish Audit Commission supported UNISON's assessment of how councils in Scotland have been failed. Their report highlighted how Scottish councils face the most difficult budget-setting context seen for many years with the ongoing impacts of Covid-19, inflation and the cost-of-living crisis.

Two-thirds of councils intend to use reserves to help bridge the 2022/23 gap between anticipated expenditure and revenue (the budget gap) of £0.4 billion but this reliance on non-recurring reserves is not sustainable in the medium to long term.

An increasing proportion of local government funding is now either formally ring-fenced or provided with the expectation it will be spent on specific services.

The report also focused on how council funding has been neglected compared to other areas of the public sector in Scotland in the last decade.

Revenue funding from the Scottish Government to local government between 2013/14 and 2021/22 increased by 6.1% (in real terms) whereas Scottish Government revenue funding to other parts of the Scottish Government budget increased by a significantly higher figure of 27.2% over the same period.

## **7.8 South East**

Pay has been at the heart of much of the organising work for the South East Local Government Service Group Committee in the past year. Taking time to learn from the previous year's NJC turnout, all NJC branches were invited to participate in meetings and discussions on the pay deal for 2022/23. This was work that we can all

be proud of, but we know that we must keep on organising branches and members to do even better this year. The NJC consultation in 2022 saw a huge improvement on turnout: we more than doubled our overall turnout in the consultative ballot.

Working together with organisers and branches a trial was implemented to support branches on local pay (LP) bargaining in Kent. The project brought together LP branches to discuss the different ways in which branches approach pay talks and to understand the areas of support needed with varying degrees of experience. It was agreed that branches would submit the same claim to create unity and demonstrate a joined up and organised approach to counter the inevitable race to the bottom of employers. This work gave branches an opportunity to come together and share their experiences and best practice. Following its success and seeing a higher number of improved offers this is something the committee hopes to replicate in other areas to give support to branches on LP bargaining.

The South East autumn conference was held as a residential in-person event for the first time since COVID and it was a very welcome event. The conference was delighted to invite and hear from some brilliant speakers: Alicia Kennedy from Generation Rent, Ruth Levin Senior National Officer, and Lauren Sullivan Labour Leader for Kent. Lord Roy Kennedy of Southwark was our special guest at the conference dinner. The event included workshops delivered by the regional teams and the Co-Chairs, a law update from Thompson's on Covid as a disability.

Everyone has worked extremely hard this year for our members in local government, and huge thanks must go to all branches and activists. A special mention must be made for the fantastic achievement of Reigate and Bandstand branch who were successful in reaching the turnout threshold and took strike action last year over their pay. Well done - fantastic work!

We would like to thank all branches and committee members for their hard work this year.

## **7.9 South West**

### **Cuts and redundancies**

A number of authorities and employers have been undertaking restructures to try and meet their financial situations, though it remains the case that not filling vacancies seems to be the most common means of achieving this. However, that is now becoming an increasing burden to the staff that remain, and causing more issues around service delivery.

### **Pay and conditions**

The scope of jobs that local authorities are reporting as difficult to recruit to seems to be growing. This has been the case for some time in the lower paid roles, but we are increasingly seeing reports of difficulties further up the pay spines too. A number of authorities are now looking to undertake pay and grading exercises with a view to trying to find a way of addressing this.

Issues around market forces have also become increasingly a topic of conversation as employers look to address the recruitment and retention issues they face.

### **Privatisation and service delivery issues**

The difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff are placing increased pressure in certain areas to maintain service delivery.

We have also seen some council-created companies starting to struggle to compete in markets such as school catering provision, with these contracts now going out to private companies.

### **Recruitment and organising**

The increase in authorities and employers looking to make changes to their pay structures to deal with the recruitment and retention issues has created opportunities for recruitment and organising. We have also seen the trend of having specific allowance issues surface, for particular groups of employees, such as unsocial hours or mileage, and this has also presented an organising opportunity.

### **Other significant developments**

The authorities in Somerset have combined to become a unitary authority. Branches had already undertaken an exercise to merge in advance of this as it would enable them to deal more efficiently with the issues that would arise as a result. We know the councils had large deficits that would need to be dealt with, and whilst they hope this move limits some of that, there is still likely to be a heavy deficit for the new authority, which will no doubt lead to a lot of negotiations over the coming year or two.

## **7.10 Cymru/Wales**

The Cymru Wales Local Government Committee has continued to meet regularly, with the Local Government Committee Secretariat (made up of the Committee Chair and Vice Chair, the Wales representatives on the SGE and NJC Committee, the Head of Local Government, and the Area Organiser for Local Government) progressing Committee business between meetings. Wales sector forums operate in Further Education, Careers, Social Care, BAOT and Schools and these have been functioning well over this last year. The Wales Local Government Service Group works with the other NJC Trade Unions and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) through the Joint Council for Wales (JCW) and with the Welsh Government through the Workforce Partnership Council (WPC - a tripartite public sector consultation and negotiation body bringing together Welsh Government, public sector employers and the trade unions).

### **Cuts and redundancies**

UNISON worked with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to lobby Senedd Members ahead of the 2023/24 provisional settlement and after. The settlement for 2022-23 saw an increase of 9.4% on a like-for-like basis however all

local authorities were braced for a severely curtailed settlement and cuts due to a lack of Westminster Government funding to the Senedd, the unfunded nature of the NJC pay award and inflationary pressures. In December it was announced that adjusting for transfers, core revenue funding for local government in 2023/24 would increase by 7.9% with no authority receiving less than a 6.5% increase. Whilst this does not make up for years of austerity, it demonstrates a renewed commitment from the Senedd and from the Minister for Finance, UNISON member Rebecca Evans MS, to support the work of local authorities in Wales. As a consequence of this and last year's settlement, cuts and redundancies have remained lower than predicted after the provisional settlement as the focus has been on recruiting and retaining staff in post.

## **Pay and conditions**

Throughout the pandemic, UNISON worked closely with local government employers, through the JCW, to deal with the crisis to ensure a rapid and consistent response to emerging issues across Wales. In February of last year, local authorities removed their support for an all-Wales Long Covid protocol to support our members in their recovery. Despite this, the Head of Local Government signed a joint statement with the employers promoting CIPD best practice on how to deal with staff still suffering from long covid.

Noting that fuel prices throughout Wales had increased due to global inflationary pressures, UNISON led negotiations with the JCW around a temporary all Wales mileage rate of 50ppm as had been negotiated across NHS Wales. Whilst those negotiations were successful, agreed and implemented across most local authorities, it did open up a number of cracks in the relationship that some local authorities have with the JCW and the WLGA. Some authorities refused to accept the JCW agreement. As a direct consequence, UNISON called for a fundamental, external review of the JCW which is likely to report in the Autumn of 2023.

UNISON has played a leading role on keeping equality at the heart of the JCW. Noting our demographics in schools and social care we have asked for a fundamental review and update on the level of menopause awareness and support throughout local authorities in Wales. As part of this process, UNISON will be working with our Women's Committee, UNISON Centre and the Wales TUC to survey our entire local government membership in Wales, around 36,000 members, to better understand the real lived workplace experiences of our membership in all of its diversity.

In Further Education in Wales, a pay claim was submitted in June 2022 to the College Principals' Forum for a 12% pay increase. In the absence of a pay offer by late November 2022, the joint trade unions proposed that an interim award was made and it was agreed that a 5% supplement (backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022) would be paid from December. In addition, the Real Living Wage was implemented for relevant staff, again backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> August. Feedback from members was that the interim payment was welcome, and the work done by the trade unions was appreciated.

No offer has yet been made for 2022/23 pay and formal pay talks had not yet started at the time of writing (March 2023). This is because there is an agreement in Wales through the Wales Negotiating Committee for Further Education (WNCFE) that all staff in Further Education receive pay increases equivalent to Teachers in Wales, and teaching unions were still balloting at the time of writing. The employer side remains committed to pay parity for all college staff with schoolteachers on the condition that this is fully funded by the Welsh Government. Work is continuing on additional annual leave and an all-Wales pay scheme for business support staff.

UNISON continues to play a pivotal role in the Schools Social Partnership Forum 'Teaching assistant task and finish group' now renamed the 'Support Staff Workshop Board' which includes representation from our TA membership. This group has brought long standing issues like deployment, access to training and development, standardisation of roles and pay to the fore. It continues to deliver a National Professional Learning Entitlement to support the delivery of the new curriculum and a recommendation from the Education Minister, and UNISON member, Jeremy Miles MS, to all governing bodies that they assign the role of Teaching Assistant Champion to one of their members to ensure TAs' perspective in any decision making. The Workforce Board has been set up to ensure that all recommendations of the Task & Finish Group Discussion Paper (2021) are actioned in an appropriate timescale. The Board will have overview of the key recommendations, to co-ordinate effective communication with all TAs across Wales, work with TAs to create updated job descriptions and liaise with the Association of Directors of Education in Wales on TA job descriptions.

Social care has been a major focus in Wales, as Welsh Government have committed to improving pay, conditions, union membership and recognition for the 67% of care workers who work in the private sector, as part of their social partnership and fair work agendas. UNISON has played a leading role in the tri-partite Social Care Fair Work Forum and our big win was the Real Living Wage for care workers in Wales, implemented last April. During 2023 we are hoping to be on track for a timetable for sectoral collective bargaining for private sector care, which will be a huge step forward for UNISON and tens of thousands of exploited care workers across Wales.

The Strategic Organising Unit has been supporting our organising work across social care and it is anticipated that as the Fair Work Forum prizes open access to these difficult to reach workers for trades unions, we will need significant organising resources to take advantage of the opportunities.

### **Privatisation and service delivery issues**

On social care policy, UNISON's biggest success has been on our campaign for a publicly delivered National Care Service (NCS). Following on from last year's successful motions at the Wales TUC conference and the Wales Labour Party (WLP) Conference, our motion to the March 2023 WLP conference now commits the WLP to produce a timetable for a National Care Service. We have also played a key part in the Welsh Government's Expert Panel for recommendations towards a National Care Service for Wales. Whilst we considered the recommendations something of a missed opportunity, UNISON managed to get some significant boost for direct local government delivery amongst the recommendations. In addition,

UNISON Cymru Wales commissioned APSE (the Association for Public Service Excellence) to produce a compelling report which presents the business case for a publicly delivered NCS. The launch was held in Cardiff Bay with council leaders and Welsh Government Ministers present.

In the past year, councils in Wales have reported staff recruitment issues in several sectors, namely domiciliary and homecare (including in-house provision), social workers, refuse workers and school support staff in some areas. The private care sector experienced some acute service delivery issues during 2022/23 which UNISON has used to build the case for greater certainty through public sector delivery.

## **Recruitment and organising**

Recruitment in local government in 2022 in Wales surged by 25% compared to the year before with just under 5,100 new members joining in Wales compared to 4,000 in 2021. At the Cymru Wales Local Government Seminar in November 2022, branch representatives agreed to continue boosting our campaigning, visibility and effectiveness of our committee activity whilst embarking on a major digital update your details campaign.

Our organising-focused Schools Seminar in January 2023 was an enormously successful event which has received very positive feedback. The seminar was opened by UNISON member, Mark Drakeford MS, the First Minister for Wales and closed by Jeremy Miles MS, our Education Minister, who also engaged in a Q&A. Delegates were thanked by both Cabinet Ministers for the work they do in schools every day, and they reinforced commitments to continue to explore how improvements can be made. The seminar also covered violence at work, the Workforce Board, making schools LGBTQ+ friendly, appropriate deployment of TA's, the Education Workforce Council and social prescribing.

### **7.11 West Midlands**

#### **Cuts and redundancies**

The region has not experienced severe cuts and redundancies across 2022, however most branch secretaries have reported that it is the ongoing response to cuts from previous years which continues to impact on service delivery.

#### **Pay and conditions**

After 20 months the dispute at Sandwell Leisure Trust, resulting from the employer using fire and rehire (March 2021) to move away from NJC pay, was resolved with members returning to NJC terms and conditions. The Dudley General Branch ran a campaign to secure the real living wage across their outsourced libraries. Serco settled a pay claim of 8% at Sandwell Depot.

A new pay spine was introduced at Staffordshire Moorlands following acceptance by UNISON's members after negotiation. There had been dozens of members who had



been stopped from progressing through the pay spine over several years so pay had fallen behind.

The region contacted its social care members (over 10,000) regarding the recruitment and retention fund. Members wrote back where employers were not passing the fund on and the region followed up with employers. Members gave us feedback that some employers were offering enhanced pay in exchange for signing new contracts that eroded potentially lucrative terms, eg unsocial hours enhancements, which the region successfully dealt with.

### **Privatisation and service delivery issues**

Staffordshire County Council previously outsourced the Domiciliary Home Care Service, but the provider could not satisfy the contract, so the Council has agreed to set up its own in-house service again.

Cuts from several years ago are biting in the region impacting on service delivery, eg in Coventry where previous cuts to youth services are having a knock-on impact on children's early intervention services.

### **Recruitment and organising**

September – November 2022 saw the region gain 534 members across its Local Government branches, which was a positive end to the year.

Warwickshire Branch undertook a recruitment and organising campaign visiting all its sites outside of the council to cleanse data and meet members they don't normally see. This was followed up with surveys generating contacts and reps, and the creation of more online content for members. Warwick District Branch campaigned to improve the council's response to disability and health and safety. New forums have been set up to discuss and improve any arising issues, and the employer, on the back of the campaign, has employed a new equalities officer.

The regions school's team has delivered a school's strategy which all 14 branches with schools have signed up to. Each branch has a schools plan to grow members and activists and to secure further recognition agreements. 2022 saw the team deliver eight new recognition agreements across regional MATs, and branch activists took responsibility for 15 JNCs across regional MATs. The team, with the support of the Regional Education Team, have put on education courses which 180 schools support staff attended last year.

## **7.12 Yorkshire and Humberside**

### **Cuts and redundancies**

There have been no significant cuts to services or significant numbers of compulsory redundancies. This is likely to be a very different story in 2023/24 as local authorities in the region have a total funding gap of £252,720,114.

## **Pay and conditions**

In November 2022 Incommunity Housing Association in Bradford served six months' notice to terminate the trade union recognition agreement and collective bargaining machinery. Conciliation via ACAS is ongoing.

The Regional Local Government Service Group Committee (RLGSGC) has resolved to seek an urgent meeting of the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Council for Local Government Services to raise our concerns and to discuss a regional/sub-regional approach to labour market challenges, the increasing numbers of social workers leaving the profession and the application of market supplements.

Care home staff who were outsourced by York City Council in 2021 and had many of their NJC terms and conditions removed in 2022. This is a familiar story across the sector but an exciting initiative has been developed in Leeds which, if successful could be replicated in other local authorities. In partnership with Leeds City Council, UNISON has developed a Partnership Working Group (PWG) which is a city-wide Adult Social Care Provider Forum including commissioned services in or on behalf of the Council. This includes care homes, home care, supported living and day service providers. Attendance at the PWG is a contractual requirement and the shared objectives of the PWG are to try and promote minimum standards of good practice for treatment, reward, support, and conditions at work and to shape proposals for minimum standards of care and professional delivery of social care. The PWG discusses training, education, workforce retention and development.

## **Privatisation and service delivery issues**

In April 2023 Bradford Council will be TUPE transferring 1500 employees into a newly created Children's Trust due to a directive from central government in response to poor CQC inspection results and the tragic death of baby Star Hobson. During 2022 negotiations have been ongoing to ensure the voice of UNISON members will be heard throughout the entire organisation and our members' interests are protected.

Elsewhere in the region, Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST), set up in 2014, is transferring provision back to the council after the organisations agreed the current model was hindering progress, failing to sustain quality and failing to be led adequately. The Council has said that when the workforce transfers back to the Council in April 2023, the TUPE will be 'static' and NJC pay settlements will not apply.

On 1 April 2023 North Yorkshire will move to a unitary system of local government. The District and Borough Councils will no longer exist as they will be incorporated into the new council. 98% of members in the County Council voted to accept the new terms and conditions as they are more favourable. Members' terms and conditions are to be protected under TUPE with the option to go onto the new council's terms and conditions once they transfer, if they wish.

North Yorkshire County Council has insourced their highways department, York City Council has insourced economic development and adult learning provision and Hull City Council has insourced Norfolk Property Services Humber and Civica which has seen approximately 200 staff welcomed back to Hull City Council.

### **Recruitment and organising**

We have a small Local Organiser (LO) Team in the region who are deployed on project bids in branches to assist branch organising across all service groups. During 2022 in local government their work was primarily focused on schools. As we know in local government many occupational groups are not fully back in workplaces post covid so it has been challenging to identify issue-based organising projects in non-school workplaces.

The LO Team assisted the National Multi Academy Trusts Project which has been fairly successful recruiting and engaging with members around a collective grievance in United Learning. We have recruited off the back of visits in Multi-Academy Trusts, and these have been useful for retention purposes too. We have identified some potential contacts and prospective activists but we haven't identified widespread campaigning issues.

Barnsley Local Government Branch had a 12 month LO project to recruit and organise in schools. This has been very successful, turning round negative recruitment and retention figures in the branch and bringing the branch back into positive territory towards the back end of the year.

Schools membership is leading the trends in growth in local government while on the opposite spectrum social care is more of a challenge.

### **Regional NJC Joint Council**

Yorkshire and Humberside Regional NJC Joint Council has not met for at least 20 years. The Service Group has been campaigning for the last two years to re-establish this committee and despite resistance from the Employer's Side a new Constitution has finally been agreed and the Joint Council is to start meeting again in 2023.

## **Appendix A: Composition of National Service Group Committees and UNISON Representatives on National Negotiating Bodies**

### **Local Government Service Group Executive**

Rita Ball ((Yorkshire & Humberside)), Neil Bland (Eastern), Alison Boshier (Cymru/Wales), Amanda Brown (NJC Committee), Gavin Cartwright (FE & 6th Form College Committee), Marilyn Cox (South East), Melissa Cox (Ofsted Committee), Angie Deacon (Eastern – until February 2023), Jane Doolan (NEC), Andrea Egan (NEC), Mark Evans (Cymru/Wales), Sara Evans (East Midlands), Mark Ferguson (Scotland), Lois Founds (North West), Sean Fox (NJC Committee), Carol Garfield (West Midlands), Janet Green (NJC Committee), Neil Guild (South West), Susan Hayden (Eastern), Pam Howard (Shadow Schools Committee), Sonya Howard (Greater London), David Hughes (West Midlands), John Hughes (Chief Off & Snr Managers Committee), Daphne Hutchinson (Northern Ireland), Edwin Jeffries (NJC Committee), Kathleen Kennedy (Scotland), Adrian Kennett (Yorkshire & Humberside), Inez Kirk (Scottish LG Committee), Diana Leach (NEC), Cath Lewis (East Midlands), Clara Mason (Greater London), Heather McKinstry (Northern Ireland), Anju Paul (Greater London), Diane Peacock (Northern), Hugo Pierre (Shadow Schools Committee), Richard Platt (East Midlands), Serena Powis (South East), John Price (FSA Committee), Marie Quigley (Scotland), Dave Rees (Youth & Community Workers Committee), Shazziah Rock (West Midlands), Zoe Rodgers (South West), Kim Russell (Cymru/Wales), Shirley Scott (Northern), Lorraine Thomson (Scottish LG Committee), Angela Waller (Yorkshire & Humberside), Ed Whitby (Northern), Glen Williams (North West), Rena Wood (North West), Jon Woods (South East), Maxine Young (FE & 6th Form College Committee)

National Secretary: Mike Short  
Senior National Officer: Ruth Levin  
Committee Administrator: Indira Patel

### **SECTOR COMMITTEES**

#### **FE and Sixth Form Colleges Committee**

Jacqui Bufton / Andrew Wade (Eastern), Yvonne Costello (East Midlands), Alan Copley (Greater London), Gavin Cartwright (West Midlands), Sarah Jan Robertson (Scotland), Mair Wyn Jones (Cymru/Wales), Joanne MacMillan (Cymru/Wales), Michael Wilson / Maxine Rowden (Northern), Fran Murray (North West), Nikki Fabry (South East), Jeanette Kitteringham (Yorkshire and Humberside), Andrew Beech (HESGE observer) / Linda Holden (substitute).

National Officer: Leigh Powell (FE), Ben Thomas (6<sup>th</sup> Form)

#### **FE Support Staff Trade Union Side**

Michael Wilson, Gavin Cartwright, Maxine Rowden

National Officer: Leigh Powell

## **Sixth Form Colleges Trade Union Side**

Nikki Fabry, Jeanette Kitteringham, Kevin Dacombe

Secretary: Ben Thomas

## **UNISON NJC Committee**

Rita Ball (Yorkshire and Humberside), Tony Barnsley (West Midlands), Jennifer Black (Northern), Neil Bland (Eastern), Alison Boshier (Cymru/Wales), Linda Boyer (North West), Elizabeth Brennan (Eastern), Daniel Broughton (Public Sector), Amanda Brown (South West), Sarah Carter (Yorkshire and Humberside), Mark Chiverton (South East), Lianne Dallimore (Wales), Dave Evans (Private Sector), Joy Evans (Public Sector), Mark Fisher (Wales), Sean Fox (Greater London), Helen Gray (Yorkshire and Humberside), Janet Green (Northern), James Hawker (Community & Voluntary), John Hughes (Chief Officers), Edwin Jeffries (Northern), Caroline Johnson (West Midlands), Stephanie Kennedy (Northern Ireland), Mary Lancaster (Greater London), Diana Leach (South East), Debbie Lydon (Northern), Clara Mason (Greater London), Janet McKenna (East Midlands), Catherine McKenna (Northern Ireland), Najeeb Nazir (East Midlands), Dave Rees (Youth & Community), Shazziah Rock (West Midlands), Ann Taggart (Northern Ireland), Kevin Treweeks (South West), Glen Williams (North West), Rena Wood (North West)

National Secretary: Mike Short

Senior National Officer: Ruth Levin

National Officer: Abby Kimantas

Assistant National Officer: James Bull

Committee Administrator: Alexandra Murray

## **UNISON NJC Trade Union Side**

Rita Ball (Yorkshire and Humberside), Tony Barnsley (West Midlands), Jennifer Black (Northern), Neil Bland (Eastern), Alison Boshier (Cymru/Wales), Linda Boyer (North West), Elizabeth Brennan (Eastern), Daniel Broughton (Public Sector), Amanda Brown (South West), Sarah Carter (Yorkshire and Humberside), Mark Chiverton (South East), Lianne Dallimore (Wales), Dave Evans (Private Sector), Joy Evans (Public Sector), Mark Fisher (Wales), Sean Fox (Greater London), Helen Gray (Yorkshire and Humberside), Janet Green (Northern), James Hawker (Community & Voluntary), John Hughes (Chief Officers), Edwin Jeffries (Northern), Caroline Johnson (West Midlands), Stephanie Kennedy (Northern Ireland), Mary Lancaster (Greater London), Diana Leach (South East), Debbie Lydon (Northern), Clara Mason (Greater London), Janet McKenna (East Midlands), Catherine McKenna (Northern Ireland), Najeeb Nazir (East Midlands), Dave Rees (Youth & Community), Shazziah Rock (West Midlands), Ann Taggart (Northern Ireland), Kevin Treweeks (South West), Glen Williams (North West), Rena Wood (North West)

## **UNISON NJC Trade Union Side Executive**

Mike Short (National Secretary), Ruth Levin (Senior National Officer), Abby Kimantas (Assistant Trade Union Side Secretary), Seán Fox (Greater London), Diana Leach (South East), Janet Green (Northern), James Bull (Trade Union Side Secretariat), Alexandra Murray (Trade Union Side Secretariat)

## **Scottish Local Government Committee**

General seats: Steven Larkin, William Shearer, Mark Ferguson, Scott Donohoe, Tom Connolly, Arthur Nicoll, Kenny McCallum, Phil McGroggan

Women's seats: Lorraine Thomson, Marie Quigley, Inez Kirk, Brenda Aitchison, Pam Robertson, Margaret Gallacher, Roz Ronan, Alison MacCorquodale

Low paid women's seats: Kathleen Kennedy, Brenda Kelly

## **Chief Officers and Senior Managers Committee**

John Hughes (Cymru/Wales), Lianne Dallimore (Cymru/Wales), Vacancy (South East), Vacancy (South West), David Ousby (Eastern), Vacancy (East Midlands), Vacancy (Greater London), Vacancy (Northern), Vacancy (North West), Vacancy (West Midlands), Vacancy (Yorkshire & Humberside)

Secretary: Ruth Levin

Assistant National Officer: Marilyn Bailey

## **Care Quality Commission Committee**

Stephanie Richards (Eastern), Taofik Balogun (Greater London); Susannah Cooke, (Northern), Karen Richards (NCSC); vacancy (South East), Alison Mesher (South West), vacancy, (West Midlands), vacancy (Yorkshire and Humberside), Yin Naing (East Midlands), James Hedges (NHS Professionals)

National Officer: Matthew Egan

Administration Support: Colette Whitehead

## **FSA/FSS Sector Committee**

Graeme Anderson (FSS), Richard Collier (FSA-Northern), John Price (SGE), Alan Colson (FSA-South East), Graham Cross (FSA-Cymru/Wales), John Rowland (FSA-South West), Mark Haylett (FSA-East Midlands), Vacancy (FSA-North West), Darren Hough (FSA-West Midlands), Alan Howarth (FSA-Yorkshire & Humberside), Wayne Parker (FSA-National Food Crime Unit), Chris Tozer (Eastern) and Christin Price (FSA-Official Veterinarians).

Secretary: Paul Bell

## **OFSTED Committee**

Melissa Cox (South West), Ricky D'Arcy (East Midlands), Northern (vacant), Yorkshire and Humberside (vacant), Eastern (vacant), Greater London (vacant), North West (vacant), South East, (vacant), West Midlands, (vacant).

Secretary: Ben Thomas

## **School Sector Committee**

Becky Everett / David Wand (East Midlands), Tracey Adnan / Hugo Pierre (Greater London), Kim Convery / Karen Jackson (Northern), Anne Taggart / Samantha Bronze (Northern Ireland), Pam Howard / Cathryn Baggaley (North West), Lorraine Thomson / Avril Brady (Scotland), Tracey Baker / Keith Manville (South East), Rauf Rawson / Grace Lawlor (South West), Jonathan Lewis / Sara Allen (Cymru/Wales), Carol Garfield / Nigel Brindley (substitute David Williams) (West Midlands), Julie Toyne / Lisa Smith (Yorkshire & Humber), Alison Boshier (NJC)

National Secretary: Mike Short  
National Officer: Joanna Parry  
National Officer: Chris Fabby  
Assistant National Officer: Jack Robinson

## **Youth and Community Workers Committee**

Dave Rees (Cymru/Wales); Tony Beesley (North West); Kerry Gray (South West); Declan Gallagher (Northern Ireland)

Secretary: Abby Kimantas

## **SERVICE GROUP WIDE FORUMS**

### **Careers Service Forum**

Vacancy (Eastern), Andrew McGregor (North West), Charlie Friel (West Midlands), Vacancy (Scotland), Gareth Jones (Cymru/Wales), Vacancy (Local Government SGE), Vacancy (Yorkshire and Humberside), Vacancy (South East).

Contact Officer: Ruth Smith

### **Fire and Rescue Forum**

Jacob Collier (East Midlands), Afi Khan (Greater London), David Drummond (Northern), Jonathan Cooper (North West), Andrew Fowler (South West), Angela Johnson (West Midlands), Joy Thomas (Yorkshire and Humberside), Edwin Jeffries (SGE)

Contact Officer: Natalie Ntim  
Committee Administrator: Alexandra Murray

## **Home Care Forum**

Polly Smith (Eastern); vacant (East Midlands); vacancy (Greater London); vacancy (Northern); Vacancy (Northern Ireland); Graeme Ellis (North West); vacancy (Scotland); vacancy (South East); vacancy (South West); Isabel Jukes (Cymru/Wales); Mandy Buckley (West Midlands); vacancy (Yorkshire/Humberside); Anju Paul (Service Group Executive); vacancy (Private Agency Representative – 1); vacancy (Private Agency Representative - 2); vacancy (Social Care Forum); vacancy (Community & Voluntary Representative)

National Officer: Matthew Egan  
Administration Support: Colette Whitehead

## **Housing Forum**

Tracey Sutton Postlethwaite (Cymru/Wales); Gail Taylor (Cymru/Wales); Carla Williams (East Midlands); Carol Broderick (East Midlands); vacancy (Eastern); vacancy (Eastern); Liz Wheatley (Greater London); vacancy (Greater London); Kerry Wade (North West); vacancy (North West); vacancy (Northern Ireland); vacancy (Northern Ireland); Christine Jackson (Northern); Beverley Trenholme (Northern); Scott Donohoe (Scotland); Tracy Hill (Scotland); vacancy (South East); vacancy (South East); vacancy (South West); vacancy (South West); David Hughes (West Midlands); vacancy (West Midlands); Sheila Northridge (Yorkshire & Humberside); Sarah Foster (Yorkshire & Humberside); Richard Platt (SGE Rep)

Assistant National Officer: James Bull

## **Social Care Forum**

Vacant (Eastern); Lorna Smith, (East Midlands ); Kerie Anne, (Greater London); David Glew (Northern); Vacant, (Northern Ireland); Carl Greatbatch (North West); John Watson, (Scotland); Duncan Eastoe (South East); Tara Thomas, (South West); Evelyn Williams, (Cymru/Wales); Tracey Mooney (West Midlands) Carol Ring, (Yorkshire/Humberside); Mark Fisher, (Additional Seat 1); Lois Founds (Additional Seat 2); vacant (Additional Seat 3); Pat Jones, (Community & Voluntary); vacant (CAFCASS) vacant (Health); Polly Smith, (Homecare); Glen Williams, (Service Group Executive); Sonia Howard, (Service Group Executive)

National Officer: Gill Archer



## **WORKING GROUPS**

### **Devolution Working Group**

Glen Williams (SGE Chair) and Lorraine Thomson (Vice Chair), Mark Ferguson and Inez Kirk (as SGE members) and Marie Quigley (additional rep) ((Scotland)), Heather McKinstry and Daphne Harper (Northern Ireland), Kim Russell and Mark Evans (as SGE members) and Jan Davis (additional rep) ((Cymru/Wales))

National Secretary: Mike Short  
Senior National Officer: Ruth Levin  
Committee Administrator: Indira Patel

### **LGPS Working Group**

Glen Williams (SGE Chair) and Lorraine Thomson (Vice Chair), Sean Fox, Mark Evans, Serena Powis, Edwin Jeffries (reserve) (England and Wales), Inez Kirk and Mark Ferguson ((Scotland)), Heather McKinstry and Daphne Harper (Northern Ireland)

National Secretary: Mike Short  
Senior National Officer: Ruth Levin  
Committee Administrator: Indira Patel

### **Pay and Service Conditions Working Group**

Glen Williams (SGE Chair) and Lorraine Thomson (Vice Chair), Jon Woods, Sonya Howard, Clara Mason, Adrian Kennett, Janet Green, Edwin Jeffries, Ed Whitby (English Regions), Inez Kirk and Marie Quigley ((Scotland)), Heather McKinstry (Northern Ireland), Mark Evans and Kim Russell (Wales)

National Secretary: Mike Short  
Senior National Officer: Ruth Levin  
National Officer: Abby Kimantas  
Assistant National Officer: James Bull  
Committee Administrator: Alexandra Murray

### **Recruitment and Organising Working Group**

Inez Kirk, Angela Waller, Glen Williams, Amanda Brown, Maxine Young, Marie Quigley, Kim Russell, Lois Founds, Carol Garfield

Senior National Officer: Ruth Levin  
Committee Administrator: Indira Patel

## **Service Delivery Working Group**

Glen Williams (SGE Chair) and Lorraine Thomson (Vice Chair), Shirley Scott, Andrea Egan, 1 vacancy (English Regions), Inez Kirk and Marie Quigley and Kathleen Kennedy (Scotland), Heather McKinstry and Daphne Harper (Northern Ireland), Kim Russell, Mark Evans, Alison Boshier (Cymru / Wales)

National Secretary: Mike Short  
Senior National Officer: Ruth Levin  
Committee Administrator: Indira Patel

## **Local Government Equalities Liaison Committee**

Pam Howard (SGE), Kathleen Kennedy (SGE), Shazziah Rock (SGE), Janet Green (SGE), Jackie Lewis (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender + Committee), Jennifer Black and Candice Woods (Job sharers - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender + Committee), Sonia Stewart (National Black Members' Committee), James Minto (National Black Members Committee), Maggie Griffin (National Women's Committee), Sonya Howard (National Women's Committee), Carl Phillips (National Disabled Members Committee), Bertha Kanyangu (National Disabled Members Committee), Terri Pearson (National Young Members Forum).

Secretary: Ruth Levin  
Assistant National Officer: Marilyn Bailey

## Appendix B – 2022 Local Government Service Group Conference Decisions

1. Funding Cuts and Ethnicity Pay Gap in Local Government  
Carried as Amended: 1.1
2. Mandatory Vaccinations  
Carried as Amended: 2.1
3. Covid and Long Covid  
Carried as Amended: 3.1
4. New Ways of Working in Local Government  
Carried as Amended: 4.1
5. Sexual Harassment, Still Going Strong!  
Carried
7. Trans Equality in Local Government – Louder and Prouder!  
Carried
8. Make 2022 the Year of Disabled Workers in local government workplaces  
Carried
9. Home Working and Reasonable Adjustments  
Carried
11. Pay – Campaigning & Balloting  
Carried
13. Pay for Members Employed by Private Contractors Delivering Local Government Services.  
Carried as Amended: 13.1
14. Violence at Work – It’s Not Part of the Job!  
Carried
16. Term Time Working  
Carried

17. School Support Staff  
Carried as Amended: 17.1
18. Support the Mental Health of Staff in Colleges  
Carried
21. School-based Counselling in Every Primary and Secondary School in England  
Carried
22. Organising in Multi Academy Trusts  
Carried
23. Health and Social Care Integration – Implications for Local Government members  
Carried
24. LGBT+ Workers and Adult Social Care  
Carried
25. Promote UNISON as the Union for Social Work  
Carried as Amended: 25.1, 25.2
26. Care Workers  
Carried
- Composite A (Motions 27, 30 and 34) Climate Change in Local Government  
Carried
28. Covid-19 and the Continued Impact on Women working in Local Government  
Carried
29. End Misogyny and Violence Against Women  
Carried
31. A National Insourcing Strategy for Local Government  
Carried

32. Privatisation By The Back Door Carried

33. Beyond Covid – Building a Better Future Carried

37. Local Government Funding and Pay Carried

38. Youth Service Cuts and Impact on Crime Carried

Composite B (Motions 39, 41 and 44) Organising to Win  
Carried

40. Organising to Win Fell

42. Black Members are Vital to Local Government Structures in UNISON. Carried

Composite C (Motions 43, 45 and Amendment 43.1) Recruiting and Organising  
Young Members and Activists in Local Government Carried





Printed and published by UNISON, UNISON Centre, 130 Euston Road, London NW1 2AY  
CU/May 2023/27345/1,080/UNP16409

