

One Team for patient care

UNISON Health Service Group

Annual Report 2024



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Foreword

To all UNISON members working in health:

They say a year is a long time in politics and certainly a lot has happened since our last conference. After months of turmoil, we saw a resolution to NHS pay disputes for the majority of our members. This demonstrated both the success of our industrial action but also how far we have to go to maximise our effectiveness, especially given the legal thresholds for strike action.

Of course, at the time of writing, the fight goes on for a proper pay rise in Northern Ireland – and also for many of our members working for contractors or through staff banks.

For Scotland, Cymru/Wales and England, since the headline pay awards went through, unions have been working to deliver outcomes from the substantial earnings and workforce-related work programmes agreed as part of the deals and UNISON continues to put substantial resources into leading this work.

Meanwhile, the union's Pay Fair for Patient Care campaign goes from strength to strength, winning millions in back pay for our HCA members as a result of strong organising and campaigning, but also industrial action when needed.

In the past year, we have seen the government respond to industrial action across the public sector with even more draconian anti-strike legislation. UNISON continues to campaign against the use of Minimum Service Levels alongside the TUC and other unions.

While the union continues to make progress on many fronts, other threats have emerged, such as the proposals for a separate nursing pay spine. UNISON will maintain our opposition to such divisive policies – “One Team for the NHS” has never been a more important principle.

And the union is clear that One Team also means valuing all of our members. So in 2024 the Health Service Group Executive (HSGE) will throw its weight behind UNISON's Year of LGBT+ Workers, and we will speak out even louder in support of migrant workers – who remain essential to our NHS yet continue to face vilification by government ministers.

Anti-strike legislation and attacks on migrant workers are just part of the toxic legacy of 14 years of Tory rule. But 2024 should be a general election year, so we hope this is the last conference for a while to be held with the Conservatives in power at Westminster.

After more than a decade of funding cuts, under-staffing and privatisation, it's time for all of us to do everything we can to secure a brighter outlook for the NHS.

So as we gather in Brighton, let's take this chance to build for the future and celebrate the great work that our branches and activists do every day to support our members.

Wilma Brown, Maura McKenna, Tanya Pretswell
HSGE Charing team

Sara Gorton, Helga Pile, Alan Lofthouse
UNISON Health Group

1. Improving pay and conditions for NHS staff

Pay strategy introduction

Health Conference 2023 gave the HSGE a clear mandate to take forward the strategy for pushing towards collective bargaining on annual pay increases set out in the 'Our pay, our say' ten-point plan.

The work set out in the following pages has been taken forward within this very clear strategic aim – to move on from the discredited Pay Review Body system and extend the reach of our collective bargaining powers on behalf of health members.

Progress has been made in the shape of a formal review of the current pay-setting process directly for England and indirectly for Cymru/ Wales and Northern Ireland – and in a growing number of other health unions (and other stakeholders) adopting more critical positions towards the PRB process in its current format.

Our agenda for full collective bargaining is something the service group will continue to pursue at every opportunity in the lead-up to the general election and beyond. Our NHS needs a stable workforce with safe and sustainable staffing levels and that won't happen unless we can put pay right through proper bargaining across the whole range of pay priorities our members have said would make the difference.

Meanwhile our strategy has been to build on the major gains in profile, member participation and visibility that the pay disputes have given us by providing backing and support for branch organising and campaigning – and by making gains through UK, devolved and local negotiations on many aspects of pay, terms and conditions including banding, working time, flexible and home working.

Put pay right for Us2 campaign for contractor staff in the NHS

Work continued to promote UNISON's 'Put Pay Right for Us2' campaign aimed at securing Agenda for Change (AfC) pay rates for contractor staff working in the NHS. The health team updated and developed further Us2 campaign resources, including dispute materials and letters aimed at MPs. UNISON worked with the joint health unions and Social Enterprises UK to successfully challenge the government to make funding available for social enterprise staff where they have a dynamic link.

The health team and private contractors' unit worked in collaboration throughout the year, including to put pressure on contractor employers to pay staff in line with AfC rates, and contractor members received a number of direct communications on the Us2 campaign. 'Put pay right for Us2' briefings were held for both branches and organising staff, and both were encouraged to participate in a national contractor pay audit. In addition, the annual pay survey included bespoke questions for contractor members for the first time to allow UNISON to get a better understanding of pay priorities for contractor staff.

Support was given to branches and regions where there were active disputes, including Mitie members at the Dudley Group in West Midlands, ISS members in the South East and Northern regions, as well as Sodexo members in the South West. In November last year, regions and branches were made aware of new NHS England guidance that allowed a limited number of contractor employers to apply for funding to support them in making non-consolidated, lump-sum payments to staff. These employers needed to meet strict criteria, including having to clearly evidence that there is a fully dynamic link to AfC terms and conditions for all their staff.

The health team will continue to build on the successes of the 'Put Pay Right for Us2' campaign with the aim of increasing our membership and organisation within contractor employers in the NHS.

NHS pay round 2023/2024

At the time the 2023 Annual Report was published, UNISON remained in dispute over the outcome of the 2022 NHS pay round in England and had announced significant escalation of industrial action. Following that, UNISON secured negotiations through NHS Staff Council structures, and reached a negotiated agreement. The HSGE reported on this and the subsequent consultation, to Health Conference 2023 using an emergency motion, to ensure the issues could be addressed on the conference floor. For completeness and the record, the full outcome of that pay round is reported here, even though some of the events took place prior to Health Conference 2023.

England

By early March, we had delivered multiple days of industrial action and secured a successful re-ballot result, doubling the number of employers involved and ensuring a strike threat in ambulance trusts in every UNISON region in England. As a result, the government finally caved into our demand for talks. The HSGE held an emergency meeting and agreed to enter negotiations having received assurances that there was additional funding for pay and that prior unilateral discussions with one union would now be folded into talks through proper NHS Staff Council structures.

After two weeks of intense negotiations, an offer-in-principle was made on Thursday 16 March. The HSGE met that day and voted to put this offer to a consultation of UNISON members with a recommendation that they accept. The HSGE then met again on March 21 and agreed to run the consultation

on a tight timetable prior to UNISON Health Conference 2023.

The consultation

We ran a direct digital consultation of all members in NHS employers in England. The consultation launched on Tuesday 28 March and closed Friday 14 April. That timetable ensured health branches had the opportunity to meet collectively at Health Conference to consider the result. We also sought and received legal extensions to the IA mandates in employers where we started strike action in December.

The resulting consultation had one of the highest levels of engagement of any UNISON exercise ever conducted. On a turnout of 53%, a 74% majority of UNISON members voted to accept the government's offer. UNISON took that position to the NHS Staff Council and, with a majority of other trade unions, voted to accept and implement the offer.

Implementation work

The pay agreements reached to settle disputes in England, Scotland and Cymru/Wales all contained commitments to further work on a range of earnings and workforce issues – called 'non-pay' for short. These elements vary across the different parts of the UK, but in order to ensure any UK-wide impact is considered, Staff Council oversight and reporting has been established for this work. ['Non-pay' workstream activity in the devolved administrations is covered in section 2 of this report.]

England

Staff Council-led workstreams

Reducing agency spend: The staff side focus has been on exploring measures around flexible working and other ways to make substantive work more attractive; improving bank contracts and rates and restoring access to overtime premium rates.

Apprenticeship pay: The agreement contained a commitment to agree a new Handbook provision to ensure no detriment in basic pay for existing staff who access an apprenticeship as part of agreed career development. The group intends to raise issues around the implications of not having a national agreement for new starter apprentices, which are outside the scope of the workstream but need to be addressed.

Job evaluation and career development: Work has focused on developing recommendations around five key themes: increasing awareness and knowledge of the scheme; equity of access and consistency of outcomes; ensuring capacity at local and national levels; improving accountability; reviewing and upgrading system infrastructure.

Redundancy payments: The agreement included work to consider whether or not the Handbook should contain a mechanism to cap redundancy payments at £100k (current cap is £160k).

Violence and aggression: This workstream has been linking up work of the Staff Council with the SPF on violence to map existing work, assess impact and identify gaps and further measures needed.

Department of Health and Social Care- (DHSC-) led workstreams

Nursing career progression: The key themes under consideration are management and leadership; career education and training support; equal opportunities; and the AfC pay system linking in particular to the JEG nursing and midwifery profile review. Staff side have been working to ensure the options development considers our evidence around how nursing jobs have evolved beyond current job descriptions and banding assumptions (especially at 5) and the need to improve progression within and between bands. Staff side have also been suggesting wider options to improve career progression (e.g. support

packages for internationally educated nurses).

Review of the pay-setting process: Four strands in this workstream comprise: timing; data; appointments to the PRB; and the interface between the PRB and the Staff Council. Staff side's priority has been to address the unacceptable failure in recent years for the current process to deliver outcomes in time for the April due date – and on pushing for a formal route for the Staff Council to conduct essential negotiations on pay structure and maintenance issues.

Pension abatement: The consultation on permanent removal of abatement for special class status members has concluded and at the time of writing the government was preparing to respond formally with implementation expected by 1 April 2024.

NHS England-led workstreams

- **Safe staffing**
- **Support to newly qualified registrants**

These workstreams have significant overlaps with work NHS England had already begun with pushing for wider scope and proper partnership working an initial priority for the staff side.

NHS pay 2024/2025 – England

UNISON is continuing to push for direct negotiations through NHS Staff Council structures. In autumn 2023 we ran a member-consultation exercise to set out pay priorities, based on our existing pay policy set by Conference. Over 60,000 members responded, reflecting incredibly high member interest in pay.

This consultation exercise gave the HSGE a clear steer that members in the NHS in England wanted to go into the next pay round with three priorities:

- A meaningful pay rise
- Securing the correct banding for the work members are doing

- A commitment to reducing the working week

In December 2023, the UK government commissioned the NHS Pay Review Body to make recommendations on NHS pay for the year 2024/25. Once again, this was an incredibly delayed start to the process. The HSGE held an extraordinary meeting to take decisions on our response, and at time of writing, the HSGE was preparing to submit its formal position for the pay round to the Secretary of State and developing an organising and campaign plan.

Flexible working

The enhanced rights around requesting flexible working that we negotiated through the Staff Council have been put in place in the NHS Terms and Conditions across all four parts of the UK with ongoing work to promote best practice policies and to push for robust monitoring of uptake and outcomes.

Further Staff Council guidance was produced in October 2023 to say that employers should use the processes set out in section 33 to ensure that all requests for flexible retirement (including the new options coming onstream that month) are considered fairly and consistently.

The work to build from contractual and policy change to the wider cultural change we need to see continues to be challenging – especially in an environment of ever more chronic staffing shortages. However, it is clear that better access to flexible working would make a major contribution to solving the staffing crisis.

This year we have led work with the other NHS unions to develop a joint union campaign, due to be rolled out in the spring, to promote awareness and uptake of flexible working and to challenge and call out employers that are not doing the right thing.

Homeworking

This year we negotiated a new framework agreement on home and agile/hybrid working, which was incorporated as a new section 35 of the NHS Terms and Conditions Handbook for England and Cymru/Wales from 2 October 2023.

Feedback from UNISON branches pointed to some real concerns around ad hoc homeworking arrangements that started during the pandemic.

We were able to raise these issues and agree joint guidance on supporting the regularisation of ad hoc arrangements to support fairness and proper processes for any contractual changes. Work to develop additional guidance and materials around homeworking will be taken forward in a Staff Council task and finish group.

UNISON continued to argue for a consistent approach to employer financial reimbursement of the costs to members of working from home.

Earnings Max

Work continued with regions and branches to support active Earnings Max projects – local campaigns on NHS terms and conditions that maximise the full benefit of the AfC agreement and deliver money in members' pockets.

Workplace organising and capacity remained challenging. However, bespoke organising, bargaining and negotiating advice continued to be provided to regions and branches in support of local and regional Earnings Max activity. Examples include bank working versus overtime, bank holidays, working hours, holiday pay, local RRP, mileage rates, unsocial hours, and re-banding claims.

In early 2023, guidance was issued to branches on how to lodge a claim for the extra bank

holiday, which was granted to mark the King's Coronation. A national petition on this issue gathered nearly 7,000 signatures. This campaign sought to make sure that the usual unsocial hours rate or double time overtime rate was paid for any shift worked as well as equivalent time-off-in-lieu.

A new 'Getting it right' NHS Pensions postcard was developed to help branches and regional organising teams talk to members about pensions and the recent changes to flexible retirement in England and Wales; Scotland; and potentially soon Northern Ireland. This supported our webpage explaining the flexible retirement options for NHS staff.

The 2023 pay round highlighted some campaigning, organising and bargaining opportunities around bank contracts. 'Getting it right' campaign materials were developed to help UNISON branches and organisers to have informed conversations with members who work on an NHS-operated bank as their primary contract. Our campaign materials included ways in which bank contracts can be improved and how to use the UNISON Organising 5-step plan to win for bank workers. Guidance was also produced to help branches make the financial case to support bank workers. UNISON's health group continued to provide support to several bank worker disputes that have been developed around the lump sum payment, and other terms issues.

At the time of writing, further 'Getting it right' materials were being developed to challenge the practice of employers using bank contracts to pay for additional hours and avoid overtime payments.

Pay Fair for Patient Care

Throughout 2023, tens of thousands of band 2 Healthcare Assistants (HCAs) in the NHS joined together in UNISON to demand that their employers value their work and pay them at the right rate for the job. The campaign reached every corner of our union.

HCA roles have evolved and expanded to take on more responsibility but without the pay and recognition to match.



Pay Fair for Patient Care HCAs at Lewisham hospital

UNISON's Pay Fair for Patient Care campaign was adopted as a One UNISON organising priority and has supported tens of thousands of HCAs to win the re-banding they deserve. In Scotland, around 18,000 HCAs have been re-banded whilst in the North-West at least 10,000 HCAs have been re-banded so far.

HCAs with support from their branches and organising staff have completed surveys, formed organising committees, marched, protested, sought support from their colleagues and engaged with senior staff to put forward their case to be re-banded.

The health group and the strategic organising unit have supported the campaign by issuing negotiating guidance, producing a framework for bargaining, running training and sharing organising best practice.

UNISON health branches have encouraged HCA leaders to become involved, with

108 new stewards being trained and 625 campaign contacts becoming involved in local workplace activism.

Whilst some employers have recognised the need to re-band their staff, others refused to engage in meaningful negotiations. As a result, ballots are being run in Beds Health, North and South Tees. Members took strike action in Warrington and Halton and as result they won their fight for proper pay and recognition. At the time of writing HCAs in the Wirral had taken 45 days of strike action and remain strong and resolute to win a fair deal.

As a result of the campaign, HCAs have seen at least £50 million being paid to them in back pay and will receive up to £2000 a year more in their pay packets. In a cost-of-living crisis, UNISON members have told us that this will make a huge difference to them.

UNISON has also seen successes in re-banding of other roles, including phlebotomists, theatre support workers, ward clerks and security officers. UNISON Northern Ireland has led the way in supporting nursing members to be re-banded. Our campaign will widen in 2024 to ensure that members whose jobs have expanded significantly will get the support they need to ask for their role to be reviewed under the provisions of the JE scheme.

NHS Job Evaluation

Job evaluation (JE) continued to be a vital tool to ensure workers received equal pay for work of equal value. We prioritised both national work and the production of support and resources for branch use.

We continued to lead work in the Job Evaluation Group (JEG) and were heavily engaged in the review of the nursing and midwifery profiles.

We launched a project to map, develop and embed greater local JE capacity. The project had three main streams: training, networking and mapping – looking to up-skill organisers

and activists, connect regional networks of JE expertise, and assess the state of JE capacity across UNISON branches and NHS employers.

We created a national network of regional staff JE leads with a commitment to map our capacity regionally and support local JE activist networks.

We developed new organiser training on the NHS JE scheme and ran two-day training sessions across England and Scotland, with 70 organisers trained from 11 of the 12 UNISON regions.

The ‘Organising around NHS JE’ one-day course for activists was refreshed and regional education staff were briefed to enable them to roll this out across the country. Finally, we launched a new NHS JE webpage on the UNISON website and branches have sent in information to help us map JE capacity in their employers.



JE capacity training in Manchester

NHS Pension Scheme

UNISON continued to represent members on national bodies that govern the pension schemes in England and Wales; Scotland; and Northern Ireland.

Our main areas of work were providing guidance to branches and members on the introduction of new retirement flexibilities, issues around the implementation of the

McCloud remedy, and responding to government consultations on structural changes to the contribution tiers.

UNISON continued to provide briefings and updates for members, branches and regional/devolved health committees. UNISON's pensions unit continued to provide case work support to UNISON members.

Minimum Service Levels (MSLs)

The government responded to widespread industrial action across the public sector with draconian anti-strike legislation in the form of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act, which was passed by Parliament in July 2023 and included ambulance services within its scope. Along with the TUC and other unions, UNISON fought this all the way – in Parliament and beyond.

Regulations to bring the law into effect for ambulance services were rushed through Parliament at the end of 2023, but the government did make two concessions as a result of intensive campaigning by UNISON and others: the law will now only apply to ambulance services in England (Scotland and Wales have been excluded); and employers now have the option of continuing to use voluntary derogations to achieve the required levels of service during strikes rather than using the more punitive work notices.

Later in 2023 the government consulted on extending the legislation to cover hospital services, to which UNISON also submitted a robust response. The union sent a delegation containing health members to the TUC's special congress in December 2023 to debate how the union movement should confront MSLs, and UNISON played a prominent role in the TUC march and rally in Cheltenham in January 2023 to protect the right to strike.

Bank working and NHS Professionals

The way NHS staff work their hours and get paid varies hugely across the UK. The 2023 England pay round highlighted some campaigning, organising and bargaining opportunities around bank contracts. In addition, some NHS employers make their substantive staff work on a bank contract when doing overtime or additional hours and some have outsourced their bank to NHS Professionals.

At the HSGE AGM, a workshop was held to discuss NHS Professionals, who operate over 100 NHS banks and have 193,000 healthcare professionals (Bank Members) registered with them. They are wholly owned by the Department of Health and Social Care. Whilst NHS Professionals' 'market share' has grown, the transparency with which it operates has not.

The outcome of the workshop was a decision to ask Health Conference to support the development of a political campaign focused on demanding full transparency and public accountability and to use this to create pressure for union recognition.

The implications, both from a professional and an employment relations perspective, of practising on the bank for nurses, were also explored at an online seminar for our nursing family. Members shared their experiences and frustrations with the poorer terms and opportunities available to them, with many effectively forced to work on bank arrangements.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group

UNISON continued to contribute to the work of the NHS Staff Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group (EDIG) with projects completed

this year including engagement on the NHS England EDI improvement plan; input to the NHS Confederation Trans Allyship guide; and publication of an updated and improved Staff Council *Building disability inclusive workplaces* resource.

Ongoing projects include a workstream to review the NHS Terms and Conditions to assess and make recommendations for changes that could address gender, race and other pay gaps.

2. Devolved administration reports

i) Cymru/Wales

Pay 2023/2024

The pay deal for 2023/2024 was agreed and pay changes were implemented from June 2023. Work on the non-pay elements of the pay award continued with varying degrees of progress. Unsocial hours allowances were reinstated after one week's sickness absence. This was due for review in March 2024 and expected to remain as the permanent position.

The new All-Wales control framework for flexible workforce capacity was written in partnership and issued from December 2023 for adoption by individual employers. Acceptance of flexible working was expected as the default across the workforce unless there were clear reasons to decline.

Work continued on the reduction in the working week with no loss of earnings. Developments in NHS Scotland were particularly of interest to this working group.

The trade union side remained concerned that progress on career progression was likely to stall as employers face significant budget challenges.

Work to develop a program to enable three-yearly reviews of job descriptions was underway with a stocktake of JE capacity, number of job descriptions and age of job descriptions due for return by Workforce Teams by the end of February 2024. The development of a Wales Job Evaluation Policy was expected to be developed by the end of March 2024 to maintain the three-yearly review of job descriptions.

Pay 2024/2025

In late January the Welsh Government belatedly confirmed that it was giving the NHSPRB a remit

to make recommendations of pay for 2024/25.

Covid Inquiry

UNISON Cymru/Wales submitted an extensive report to the Wales TUC to inform their response to the Covid Inquiry Module 3: Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on healthcare systems in the four nations of the UK. The Cymru/Wales Regional Health Committee and British Association of Occupational Therapists (BAOT) colleagues provided extensive and valuable evidence for the submission.

Consultations

The Cymru/Wales Health Committee responded to Welsh Government consultations on a national band 4 (nursing associate) role in NHS Wales and an All-Wales approach to preceptorship and clinical supervision in nursing. We continued to work in partnership with Welsh Government on the next steps in both consultations.

We have also been participating in a consultation on health service procurement in Wales.

Safe staffing



Cardiff and Vale reps supporting the Safe Staffing campaign

Two Welsh branches participated in the national Safe Staffing campaign in Autumn 2023 – Cardiff and Vale Health Branch and Aneurin Bevan Health Branch. The data from these branches will be used to inform discussions with

the Wales Chief Nursing Officer team on the review and any expansion of the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016.

Student Nurse Recruitment

Cymru/Wales activists and regional staff participated in student nurse induction events in Spring and Autumn 2023, recruiting 450 new students.

ii) Northern Ireland

Our bargaining and equality priorities

The collapse in May 2022 of devolved government in Northern Ireland has caused havoc across the public sector and made it extremely difficult for trade unions to defend our members' interests. UNISON stepped up from day one of this political crisis, challenging everywhere we could the impact on working people.

Economic Strategy

The last 12 months have seen public service budgets in NI in sustained crisis. The position adopted by the Secretary of State in committing any future Barnett consequentials to repaying the overspend from the 22-23 budget presented a serious barrier to resolving the dispute UNISON members working within health and social care services were involved in.

UNISON spoke out against these budget cuts from the outset, highlighting the major impact they will have on public services.

In May, the Department published an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) in relation to the £732 million funding gap it faces. The Department suggested that £260 million of savings could be made with 'low and medium' impacts across the system. We questioned this analysis and have demanded information and engagement on the impact of these measures across services.

A major concern arising from the cuts to health funding relates to the loss of 300 additional nursing and midwifery undergraduate training places, which had been funded since 2020 as part of the 'New Decade, New Approach' agreement. We challenged the lack of mitigating measures and alternative policies proposed by the Department.

Pay in the health sector

The ongoing refusal of the NI Secretary of State to release funding to pay a 2023 pay award infuriated our members. We embarked on a series of strike days and continuous action short of strike. As of January 2024, members had been on picket lines six times and on action short of strike action (ASOS) for 14 full months. At the time of writing, the politicians had, at last, just returned to Stormont with the health committee gearing up for rapid negotiations to secure the long overdue pay settlement for 2023.

UNISON's 'No going back to normal' campaign has been the foundation of all our campaign priorities.

We have continued to campaign for best practice in the operation of public procurement. In addition, the specific actions we have pursued included evidence to the Low Pay Commission on 2024 minimum wage rates. As part of a UK-wide consultation on minimum wage rates for 2024, UNISON met with the Low Pay Commission in Belfast to provide evidence and made recommendations for the rate for 2024.

We have been able to move ahead at a policy level with a push on the Department to prepare safe staffing legislation.



Members on the picket line at Newry and Mourne

Use of agency staff in the statutory sector

UNISON participated in a new tripartite project oversight board on agency spend that has been established supported by the NI Department of Health. To date, we have secured new procurement frameworks for agency use; a policy statement issued by the previous health minister to guide corporate structures across the health service in the reduction of agency use; and a commitment by corporate health leaders to engage with trade unions in each organisation to achieve this aim. However, the reliance on agency cover has become very difficult to remove.

Negotiations also continue with health trusts on our demands to protect and maintain access to overtime and resist the extension of bank working for ancillary staff.

In tackling nursing agency spend across all health trusts, UNISON has secured enhanced critical shift payments for nursing staff in areas such as intensive care units across all health trusts.

In Belfast HSC Trust and South Eastern HSC Trust UNISON continued to work with both trusts on the review of the admin workforce to convert agency contracts and temporary contracted posts into permanent jobs.

Agenda for Change 'Pay Max'/Refresh

As part of our 'AfC Pay Max'/Refresh strategy, UNISON branches in each health trust have had many successes in securing increased re-banding outcomes for staff through the AfC 'Changed Job Process.'

In Belfast HSC Trust job descriptions have been submitted for re-banding for admin and clerical staff, ward clerks, cooks, healthcare assistants and domiciliary care staff to name a few.

In the *South Eastern HSC Trust*, following the successful re-banding of domiciliary care workers from Band 2 to Band 3, backpay was secured back to November 2021 for these workers. Other successes for staff include family support workers moving from Band 2 to Band 3 and maintenance workers moving from Band 3 to Band 4.

In the *Southern HSC Trust* UNISON successfully secured the agreement from the trust to implement sections 13.9 and 14.4 of Agenda for Change terms and conditions for workers in support services. Hundreds of support service workers on part-time contracts, who undertake additional hours, will receive an average of what they had been earning over the previous three months when off on sick leave or annual leave. Negotiations are ongoing with the trust on agreeing a retrospective date for back pay.

In the *Northern HSC Trust*, negotiations are ongoing with the expectation that engineers and electricians will be successful in their job re-banding. Revised job descriptions have also been submitted for job evaluation for support workers, healthcare assistants, domestic supervisors and homecare officers.

In the *Western HSC Trust* work is ongoing with job evaluation for a range of staff including domiciliary care and reablement staff.

Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS):

Over the past year UNISON has continued its work with the Trust to convert agency vehicle cleaning operative (VCO) roles into permanent posts within the organisation. In 2022/23, this resulted in 20 VCOs gaining permanent employment with the Trust. UNISON has also maintained with the Trust that there will be no reduction in temporary station supervisor positions, until a review of operational structures and service demand is completed.

Engagement with nursing sector structures

We maintain our regional representation on the Central Nursing and Midwifery Advisory Committee and the NI Professional Education Council. Our nurse membership has grown through 2023/24 and is now the largest membership group in the region. We have begun to rebuild our regional nurses' forum which had to fold during Covid.

Safe staffing legislation

We continue to work alongside other health trade unions to progress the development of safe staffing legislation.

We have emphasised to the Department that there must be clear reporting and accountability mechanisms in relation to workforce planning and investment. We called on all parties to prioritise proper workforce planning across health and social care and to introduce safe staffing legislation as early as possible in a new Assembly.

Social Care Forum

NI is an integrated delivery through the health service. We had secured the establishment of a NI Social Care Forum, which covers the use of the public subsidy to private providers, to include a focus on pay and terms and conditions for workers delivering care in the homecare and care home sectors.

The delivery of this initiative has been disrupted and delayed by the absence of ministerial direction. The Department has created an alternative forum which has all the signs of a manoeuvre to reduce the presence of trade union influence.

Mileage subsidy issues

A significant issue for Trust and private sector homecare workers has been the impact of the energy crisis on the value of the subsidies they receive for travel in their job. Following the mobilisation of the workforce at employer and community level, we managed to secure an enhanced subsidy for direct NHS staff which has now been extended for almost 12 months.

Success was also achieved in securing the return of VAT monies from the Northern Trust for staff who had availed themselves of the Trust car leasing scheme in the last five years. This will benefit a significant number of staff who should receive a rebate of between £500 to £5000, depending on individual circumstances.

Private homecare

These members are assigned to our health service group as ours is an integrated system. A new UNISON UK-wide project to build our membership in social care is now underway in NI.

iii) Scotland

The main focus of the Scottish health team through 2023/24 was to advance our objective of securing a positive review of Agenda for Change and to improve workforce policies.

Improvements to Agenda for Change

Working through the Scottish Terms and Condition Committee, UNISON led discussions to take forward three immediate improvements in AfC. These improvements were a proposal to reduce the working week to 36 hours without loss of pay over three years for all NHS workers

in Scotland; a review of all band 5 nursing posts using the Job Evaluation scheme and a commitment to protect learning time.

These three landmark proposals and a further fourth proposal which set out a more fundamental review of the pay system were with the Scottish Government for agreement at the time of writing.

Scotland's NHS continued to enjoy true collective bargaining on NHS pay and a joint union claim for 2024/25 has been developed for submission.



Christmas walkabout at Ayrshire and Arran Health branch

'Once for Scotland'

Through the auspices of the Scottish Workforce and Staff Governance Group (SWAG), UNISON has been directly engaged in a programme of work to review existing workforce policies and implement them across the whole of NHS Scotland. These 'Once for Scotland' policies provide a consistent approach on key policies such as absence management, disciplinary and grievance. A policy to support women experiencing menopause was agreed and work began to review facility time for TU activities.

Health branch campaigns

Health branches continued to highlight and campaign on staffing shortages and chronic underfunding for NHS Scotland. Branches also focused on challenging workplace bullying and poor workplace culture.

Safe Staffing Act

In advance of the Scottish Government implementing the Safe Staffing Act with effect from 1 April 2024 the Scottish Health Committee tasked branches with being geared up and ready to use the provisions of the Act to campaign on behalf of members and services.

3. Standing up for staff and services

UNISON has continued to ensure a high profile for campaigns run to improve health services for people who use them as well as those who work in them. This next section contains a brief overview of work done to promote our key campaigns and contribute to key political initiatives on NHS structures, funding and quality.

Race for Equality

Our Race for Equality campaign to challenge racism in the NHS continued to grow. The health team developed and ran training sessions on NHS England's Workforce Race Equality Standards (WRES) to seven UNISON regions, with over 150 activists and regional organising staff receiving the training. The training aimed to demonstrate how branches could use WRES as a bargaining tool to hold employers to account on how they were performing on race equality. Work has begun to roll this out to regional education officers so that more branches and the remaining regions could receive the training.

A focus group at Health conference 2023 on disciplinaries and race equality was the springboard for an in-depth, all-day workshop in October on the same theme. The workshop was oversubscribed, and another session was scheduled for March 2024.

We produced a film about the project started by Bath Health branch promoting better training for health staff around caring for the hair and skin of Black patients. The film was added to the NHS futures platform on the Healthcare Support workers site – a national platform – with the aim that this would encourage other trusts to implement the project.

During Black History Month we ran profile pieces on some of our Black members as part of the month's 'Saluting our Sisters' theme.

We continued our sponsorship of the 'National B.A.M.E. Health and Care Awards' by sponsoring the Inspiring Diversity and Inclusion Lead award, with the ceremony taking place in September 2023.

Disable Inequality and mental health

Disable Inequality is the HSGE's campaign to challenge disability discrimination in the NHS. It was established with the equalities team as part of the 2022 Year of Disabled Workers and developed substantially over the past two years.

Resources on disability equality for NHS branches have been produced and are available on the campaign page on UNISON's website. We developed and ran a programme of training sessions for branches and organisers on the new Workforce Disability Equality Standard, which UNISON helped develop and which provides concrete information about the working lives of disabled staff for every NHS trust in England. We are pushing hard for similar data to be available across the UK.

The mental health of NHS staff and our activists was a key theme of Health Conference last year, and so we launched in February a major mental health and wellbeing survey covering all health service group members. We intend to analyse the data which comes out of this to produce effective NHS-specific guidance for branches and to engage the media and national negotiators.

Childcare

The HSGE held a workshop session at its 2023 AGM to identify and scope the key dimensions for a campaign and agree next steps to take forward its motion passed by last year's conference 'Affordable, available and reliable NHS childcare facilities now!'

We have been liaising with the National Women's Committee to ensure plans align with the union's wider policies and campaigns around childcare and cost of living. We have raised the issues with policymakers including those responsible for NHS workforce planning.

At the time of writing, a wellbeing survey was due to launch across our UK membership with a section to gather evidence of our members' experiences and priorities around working in the NHS and access to childcare.

Early career nurses and midwives

The joint campaign for better preceptorships for early career nurses and midwives continued this year, in partnership with the Nursing Times and Florence Nightingale Foundation.

We re-launched a survey in a special edition of the Nursing Times, looking to re-engage professionals in this discussion and to see whether the situation facing newly registered nurses and midwives had improved in the last two years.

As part of the campaign the Chief Nursing Officers (CNOs) of each of the UK administrations were being engaged on their policy work to improve preceptorships.

In England, we continue to sit on the steering group for the national preceptorship framework, which has been established across the country. Evaluation and feedback have demonstrated that this framework has contributed to significant improvements in the last two years in the embedding of preceptorships in NHS and social care organisations.

Better staffing across the NHS

'Only Enough is Enough' - our new safe staffing campaign launched - designed with a model that empowers UNISON branches to take local action to engage members and hold employers to account with safe staffing data relevant to their local organisation.

Six UNISON branches across England and Wales helpfully volunteered to participate in year one of the campaign. They engaged members and collected regular data from them over two months in the autumn. Branches will be supported with comms materials and tools to help them campaign to force their employers to improve staffing levels.

The data from the campaign to date is shocking. In the study period, 63% of shifts were not safely staffed and, when this was reported, 75% of the time there was not sufficient help available from employers.

As well as holding employers to account, we will be seeking to publish the data and work with healthcare staffing researchers to ensure this receives wider attention and scrutiny. The health team will use the campaign data to lobby Governments and CNOs and to strengthen our input into the formulation of safe staffing policy and legislation. The campaign will be expanded to all UNISON regions across the UK in the coming year.

Professional regulation

The health team has continued to maintain a positive relationship with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). We received regular updates from officers at the NMC and have worked in partnership on important issues. We hosted an online seminar for UNISON nurses and midwives in February to gain a better understanding of their experiences and perspectives to improve professional regulation.

We sat on the steering group convened by the NMC to consider the options for regulation of advanced practice in nursing.

As a team we have also continued to monitor and respond appropriately to the Government's agenda for reforming the healthcare professional regulators, in collaboration with colleagues in our professional services unit. This has included raising concerns with

parliamentarians and members of the Labour shadow health team.

We continued to improve our working relationship with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), raising concerns with them about their updated standards of proficiency regarding mental health and also about their health declaration for new registrants. However, we were hugely disappointed by their decision to go ahead with their fee increase, despite our campaigning efforts to prevent it with a briefing to all MPs and MSPs and an early day motion in Westminster.

We responded to the HCPC's consultation on English-language requirements for registrants applying through the international route, and responded to a consultation opposing the General Pharmaceutical Council's proposals for a fee rise that would affect pharmacy technicians and pharmacists.

We had input into the response put together by our professional services unit to the HCPC's consultation on the proposed changes to the standards of conduct, performance, and ethics and the social media guidance. We also provided feedback on the HCPC to the Professional Standards Authority as part of their annual review of regulators.

The health group began its research to compare the different funding models of regulators in different countries with the aim to help us develop our policy position on funding of regulators and how we respond to future fee increases by regulators.

Keeping staff safe at work

UNISON continued to use our formal partnership structures to engage policymakers on the crucial issue of safety at work, including violence prevention, risk assessment, health and wellbeing support and improving sexual safety.

Throughout the last year we worked through the Social Partnership Forum (SPF) violence reduction group to revise the NHS violence prevention and reduction standard, feeding in issues that our members continue to face, such as increases in violence and aggression and sexual harassment.

UNISON has long campaigned to highlight sexual harassment as a workplace issue. We were pleased to see this reflected in the work of the SPF and a new charter launched by NHS England that commits NHS employers to taking and enforcing a zero-tolerance approach to any unwanted, inappropriate and/or harmful sexual behaviours within the workplace.

In December, in response to rising rates of a new variant of Covid-19, and to raise awareness of our campaign work around Covid, we ran a survey of our health and safety representatives to hear their concerns about their employers' preparedness in the event of a fresh outbreak and the impact this would have on staffing levels. Our report called for action to improve ventilation and other health and safety concerns, including dealing with Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) and asbestos on NHS Premises. These are now issues being raised through the NHS Staff Council's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Group (HSWG).

Through our work on the HSWG we were also involved in guidance promoting health and wellbeing and attendance at work, including new standards updated in 2023; guidance aimed to help promote, protect and support musculoskeletal health; and guidance on the safe use of chlorine-based disinfectant chemicals.

In July, we contributed to and supported new evidence-based guidance to improve support for NHS staff affected by colleague suicide.

International recruitment

The health team continued our work to support and protect overseas nurses who are being recruited to work in the UK.

Our priority was to ensure that we reached as many overseas nurses as possible to ensure they had the opportunity to join UNISON and receive the protection of union membership. To achieve this we:

- Ran monthly online webinars for members and non-members who were overseas nurses, sharing information and expertise from the team and lay reps
- Sponsored five conferences of international nursing and midwifery associations; this enabled us to attend and speak about UNISON and to deliver webinars to their members on a separate occasion, reaching many hundreds of individuals
- Produced and disseminated a toolkit and template presentation for health branches to use in recruiting overseas nurses.



International recruitment - 'Overseas Nurses' Network event 2023'

We continued to organise our Overseas Nurses' Network, led by UNISON overseas nurses themselves. We held an in-person event for 20 members in London in the autumn where our overseas nurses shared experiences, fed back to healthcare leaders and learned from UNISON experts. We will continue to grow the network in 2024.

Numerous complex and challenging cases have continued to come to our attention regarding

the exploitation of overseas nurses and care workers. The health team has worked closely with colleagues in our local government team to ensure expert support was provided to branches in these cases. We supported members to get appropriate advice, look for alternative employment and in several cases reported employers and recruitment agencies to the relevant authorities for unethical practices.

We sat on an international recruitment advisory group with NHS England and continued to lobby the NMC, NHS and DHSC, with colleagues, to ensure fair treatment of overseas nurses.

Cavendish Coalition

UNISON continued to co-convene the Cavendish Coalition which brings together health and social care stakeholders to influence and lobby governments on workforce issues arising from the UK leaving the EU.

Opposing proposed changes to immigration laws has been a key focus for the Coalition's work over the year. We spoke out against proposals to restrict family visas for international workers, and lobbied the Prime Minister to reconsider and reject once formal changes were announced in the Autumn. We made the case for disclosure of impact assessments and demanded transitional arrangements for affected workers.

The Coalition also highlighted concerns about exploitation of workers linked to the rapid expansion of international recruitment. Through this work UNISON promoted the role of our union in supporting individuals and building preventative support structures within geographical patches.

Covid Inquiry

UNISON continued to work with the TUC to provide evidence to the official UK Covid-19 Inquiry.

At the start of 2023 the scope was published for Module 3 of the Inquiry, investigating the 'impact of the pandemic on the healthcare systems in the four nations of the UK'. The union facilitated members and reps to provide testimonies to the 'Every story matters' personal impact evidence strand of this module.

Detailed submissions on policy issues were also made at the end of 2023 and UNISON's head of health was identified as the lead NHS witness for the TUC (Westminster Government Inquiry). In-person evidence sessions were due to start in April 2024.

Provider Selection Regime

Following the passage of the Health and Care Act 2022, the government belatedly published the details of the new procurement system for the NHS in England, the Provider Selection Regime, in October 2023.

The new system confirmed that the disastrous era of Andrew Lansley's NHS reforms was finally over, and draft regulations were briefly debated in Parliament at the end of 2023.

UNISON provided briefings to MPs which focused on the delay in getting the regulations produced and the areas where there is a need for the system to go further to protect the NHS from competition. The new regime came into force in January 2024 with UNISON producing a short briefing for Health branches summarising the key changes.

Challenging privatisation

The health team continued to challenge privatisation in the NHS including via the Us2 campaign; by contributing to UNISON's cross-sector 'Bringing Services Home' campaign; and by promoting the new insourcing bargaining guidance and insourcing tutor training. The health team also supported successful insourcing campaigns such as in Barts, North Middlesex, Liverpool and Lanarkshire. UNISON

also resumed work on the use of wholly owned subsidiary companies in the NHS in England.

Detailed work took place through national partnership structures to influence NHS England's plans for a staff engagement document to accompany revised guidance around subcos. Meanwhile, practical work was undertaken to support local efforts to resist the use of subcos in various UNISON regions.

In addition, the union published a bargaining guide to wholly owned subsidiaries (across the public sector) in November 2023, which included a series of good practice case studies of successful UNISON health campaigns.

One Team campaign

Our One Team campaign, which highlights the vital role of non-clinical support staff in the NHS, moved up a gear this year with the launch on One Team Day in November of our new annual One Team Awards.

The awards aim to celebrate those members, working in non-clinical support roles, who have helped to improve patient care, their service or the working lives of their colleagues.

Over 100,000 operational services members were emailed, and we received over 750 nominations for the awards.

At the time of writing, work had begun on developing a shortlist before the judging panel, which includes members of the Operational Services Occupational Group, decide on the final three winners.

One Team Day in November was focussed on the launch of the awards, while branches were able to order One Team branch merchandise and download resources to help promote the day.

Better Hospital Food campaign

Our Better Hospital Food campaign continued to push for improved standards for staff and patient food with insourcing and Green NHS carbon reduction objectives.

UNISON continued to work closely with the Soil Association's Food for Life programme targeting NHS Trusts. Our ongoing priority was to renew commitment to this campaign by encouraging current signatories and more NHS Trusts to sign up to improving hospital food through development opportunities for NHS catering staff, nutritious hospital food that is sustainable and locally sourced, in-house catering facilities and reducing food waste.

NHS Social Partnership Forum (England)

UNISON continued to co-chair the NHS Social Partnership Forum (SPF) which brings together the government, employers and trade unions on workforce policy issues for the directly employed staff of the NHS.

The publication of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan in 2023 represented a big step in the right direction. Through the plan's development UNISON fed in our members' lived experiences around recovery and backlog, unsafe staffing, retention, violence, sexual safety, and the need for wider culture change, such as a just and learning culture.

UNISON produced a detailed branch briefing in July 2023, which drew attention to positive elements, such as the proposed expansion in new roles, but questioned the ability of the NHS to implement the plan and the failure to ensure proper coverage of the non-clinical workforce.

In addition to these issues, UNISON used the other SPF structures, including the Workforce Issues Group, to report back on the development of policies around health and wellbeing, occupational health services and the

Future Workforce Solution. We also chaired the Violence Reduction Subgroup.

Through the SPF we also engaged on the development of the NHS equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) improvement plan. Work was undertaken to feed into some national people policy frameworks developed by NHS England on baby loss, menopause and flexible working, which can be used by our local partnership forums to improve the terms and experiences of NHS staff.

UNISON continued to support the Healthcare People Management Association (HPMA) awards through the SPF. Both the 2023 winner and runner-up entries went to local partnerships where UNISON had a leadership role across the staff side. The winner, the Isle of Wight NHS Trust, worked in partnership to improve its flexible working offer for staff, and the runner-up, the Liverpool University Hospitals Foundation Trust, used partnership working to successfully support organisational change.

The SPF ran several bespoke workshops covering the NHS Staff Survey results as well as reporting on the increased functionality of the reporting tool, the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan and plans for Urgent and Emergency Care.

The Regional SPFs continued to meet and explore regional issues including NHS organisations as "anchor institutions" - institutions that can be used to support local community health and wellbeing, and promote economic and social equality objectives, responding to the cost-of-living crisis, health inequalities, just and learning culture and violence reduction.

Arm's length bodies – England

UNISON led and negotiated at national partnership level with NHS national bodies throughout the year. The early part of 2023 saw NHS England merge with NHS Digital followed

by a merger with Health Education England (HEE). The new organisation embarked on a lengthy re-organisation of staff and functions throughout the year with the aim of reducing the staffing numbers by 30 to 40%. Members were represented across England by UNISON stewards who had participated in national negotiations to minimise job losses for our members.

There are currently four Commissioning Support Units (CSUs) with stewards active in representing members in re-organisations as work is in-housed by integrated care boards (ICBs).

NHS Blood and Transplant had a busy year working with UNISON Blood and Transplant Forum following the successful industrial action re-ballot, with an agreement to formally re-commit to partnership working and drive-up standards in staff engagement.

Eight national stewards' forums took place with NHSE and CSU reps, and a further four meetings with UNISON Blood and Transplant Forum including a training session with UNISON College.

NHS at 75

To mark the 75th birthday of the NHS on 5 July 2023, UNISON launched a range of materials for branches, along with suggested activities to celebrate the milestone and highlight the enormous challenges NHS staff are facing. UNISON's campaign fund supported an Aneurin Bevan Society event in Parliament on 5 July, with the union joining a panel to look at the future of the NHS and to consider the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the Windrush generation, who have done so much to build and support the NHS during its 75 years.

The union's campaign fund also supported a new project by the NHS Support Federation to create a public information resource to raise awareness around a selection of issues that are fundamental to the future of the NHS and its staff as it reaches 75. The project will create a lasting online resource designed to help protect and promote the NHS in the years to come.

4. Recruiting and organising members and raising our profile

Health student recruitment

This year, the health team continued to support regions to build on student recruitment and to improve our engagement with healthcare student members.

The team co-ordinated merchandise orders and recruitment activities with organisers across the UK. Despite a drop in student numbers and stiff competition, organisers performed excellently, enabling the union to maintain our recruitment numbers in 2023.

Improvements to our recruitment processes mean we have more students paying by direct debit, more e-mail addresses to enable communications, and improving numbers retained in longer term membership.

The health team also continued to expand our activity to improve engagement and activism amongst our student members. We co-ordinated 'Student Learning Month' in October, a series of free learning seminars for healthcare students with more than 500 participants across the month.

We introduced a new student activist role called the 'Student Advocate' in two pilot regions, the South West and Yorkshire and Humberside, with 20 signing up for the first year. This involved national training sessions, regional events and campaigning activities.

The Future Health Leaders programme ran successfully for students from across the UK, delivering six training and development sessions. Work continues to improve and grow this programme with applications now open for 2024.



Acting Head of Health Helga Pile at Future Health Leaders event

HCA/nursing support workforce

Our Pay Fair for Patient Care campaign, winning big victories for HCA members across the UK, is detailed earlier in this report.

Outside of this campaign we continued to support the wider development of the HCA and nursing support workforce.

We contributed to the survey and research of HCA roles for the Cavendish Review, 10 years on. Researchers involved in this were invited to the HCA seminar held in London in November.

This seminar was a big success, bringing more than 30 HCA members together for the day. They discussed their experiences and work and had the opportunity to hear from and influence healthcare leaders. Useful intelligence and opinion were gained to inform the work of our nursing occupational group committee.



HCA seminar at UNISON Centre

Staff from the health team will continue to co-chair the advisory group for the NHS England healthcare support worker programme, giving us a key opportunity to influence the development of the workforce.

We continued to lead the growing of an HCA network with the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), bringing together union colleagues from across Europe to give our members a voice at the European level. UNISON HCA leaders contributed to this network, learning valuable information and lessons for use in our own campaigning.

In Cymru/Wales we participated in a review of nursing support roles, ensuring key considerations were taken account of in the deployment of the nursing associate role.

Recruitment of new registrants

As detailed in the section on health student recruitment, established processes in the union meant we converted and retained a much higher proportion of students in membership as they became new registrants.

We provided a 'Nursing Survival Guide' as an online resource to engage with newly registered nurses; this was awaiting update at the time of writing.

A non-pay working group with NHS England on which UNISON Health is represented is looking

at the support for new health professionals. We will continue to push for tangible measures which improve the confidence, wellbeing and retention of new health registrants.

Green NHS and Zero Carbon NHS plans

UNISON continued to build the 'Green UNISON' campaign aimed at prioritising climate issues and activism, particularly linking it to health issues and the rest of our public services.

Health branches were encouraged to take part in 'Green UNISON week' activities in September. Alongside promoting the unionwide Green UNISON online webinars, the health group hosted a joint webinar 'Sustainable health – why greening the NHS matters to us all' with the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare.

We worked with UNISON College to develop a 'Climate Green Skills' three-part training course, with a key focus on framing climate issues as a health priority, offered to all members.

We contributed to the facilitation of a six-week 'Climate Conversations Challenge' jointly with community group 'Larger Us'. We explored different themes and difficulties that could arise in climate conversations, and equipped participants with the skills to confidently address these.

Social prescribing link workers

Social prescribing link workers are a growing job role within the NHS. We produced a report that identified key issues for SPLWs including inconsistent job titles, varying job descriptions, poor understanding of their roles, and poor support and supervision.

We worked with our learning and organising services department (LAOS) to put together a guide to courses available from UNISON College that would help SPLWs in their roles. At the time of writing we planned to put out a

survey to branches to find out more about their SPLW members and how they are supporting them.

Peer support/‘lived experience’ workers

The health team produced a scoping report on peer support/‘lived experience’ workers (PSW/LEWs) this year – informed by a branch survey, case studies from our members and a lived experience seminar we held as part of our nursing series in December 2022.

We identified the main issues affecting PSW/LEWs including inconsistent banding, varying job descriptions, pay discrepancies, retention issues, poor support and supervision and the resulting strain on their health and wellbeing.

This report was shared with the nursing and midwifery occupational group to discuss the main recommendations. It was decided that we would focus on further engagement internally with our members in this group and produce resources to help branches better support them.

5. Ensuring democratic input and oversight

Health Service Group Executive

The role of the HSGE is to oversee the implementation of policy and to consider issues arising in relation to pay, terms and conditions, recruitment and organising, campaigning, and professional issues relevant to members.

The HSGE held five scheduled, hybrid meetings over the last 12 months, as well as one (at the time of writing) extraordinary meeting. At the annual general meeting in June, the chairing team of Wilma Brown, Maura McKenna and Tanya Pretswell was re-elected.

HSGE working groups also continued to support the work of the committee. In particular, the Agenda for Change Working Group and Devolution Working Group met frequently to oversee work on NHS pay across the UK, prepare for meetings of the NHS Staff Council, and provide reports and recommendations to the wider Executive.

The HSGE agreed a work programme for 2023/24, setting strategic themes for our activities, including identifying priority areas of work in line with conference decisions and UNISON's four overall objectives set by the National Executive Committee.

Regional and occupational representatives on the HSGE were due to end their two-year term in June 2024. Elections were, at the time of writing, underway and successful candidates will take up their seats on the HSGE following National Delegate Conference 2024.

Occupational groups

Ambulance

The ambulance occupational group met regularly over the year.

The National Ambulance Strategic Partnership Forum held four full quarterly meetings in 2023 and held monthly meetings in-between.

The Ambulance Occupational Group (AOG) continued to represent ambulance staff on national forums and working groups covering areas such as job evaluation, diversity and inclusion, sexual safety and suicide prevention, and also contributed to UNISON's work in resisting Minimum Service Levels in the ambulance sector.

In addition, the AOG also took part in national negotiations around how unsocial hours are paid in the ambulance sector. Work is currently underway to prepare for the ambulance seminar which is due to take place in May 2024.

Nursing and midwifery

Our nursing and midwifery occupational group committee met regularly throughout 2023, offering strategic oversight and professional expertise to guide our work. Several external speakers and UNISON staff members attended the committee to give updates and inform the committee's work and the development of motions for health conference.

The committee continued to co-opt several additional members for expertise, including a nursing academic, a lead midwife and a student nurse representative.

The committee oversaw a series of professional online nursing and midwifery seminars we held in the autumn and winter.

Key topics discussed throughout the year included:

- Safe staffing levels
- Organising and developing HCAs
- Racism against nurses and NHS staff

- Supporting and protecting our overseas nursing and care staff
- Professional regulation
- Lived Experience Workers

Operational services

The Operational Services occupational group met three times in the last year.

The group focussed on a project around admin workers in the NHS. This included carrying out a survey of admin members, analysing the results and planning how to move forward. The committee oversaw the production of an Admin Charter, to encourage employers to invest in training and progression opportunities and ensure they are banded correctly.

The committee participated in a research project around unions and digitalisation in the UK and Norway. The research was published and contained some useful learning for UNISON's approach to digitalisation in the future.

The committee has continued to receive reports on the One Team Us2, Better Hospital Food campaign and One Team campaigns. The committee carefully considered the options for the next steps of the One Team campaign and supported the launch of the One Team Awards. Members of the committee are involved in the judging panel.

Science, therapy and technical occupational group

The Science, therapy and technical occupational group met three times in the past 12 months.

The committee's main focus was our campaign against the proposed fee increase by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). However, we continued to meet regularly with the HCPC to put forward the views of registrants. (See Professional Regulation section on page 17 for further details).

We were part of a working group developing HCPC's Principles of Preceptorship and we hosted a webinar, chaired by the STAT chair, with speakers from HCPC and NHS England about the implementation of the principles for Allied Health Professionals.

The committee continued to support our work with other unions and professional bodies on a working group to promote the roles of Allied Health Professional (AHP) support workers. We worked with our learning and organising services department (LAOS) to produce courses suitable for AHP support workers that we promoted to branches.

British Association of Occupational Therapists (BAOT)

For more than 30 years UNISON has worked in partnership with the Royal College of Occupational Therapists to provide trade union services to our BAOT members. We are proud to represent the interests of occupational therapy staff and support them at work.

In 2023 our OT Panel agreed to develop a strategy to support more opportunities for new and emerging activists, as well as continuing to support our experienced stewards. This resulted in growth in attendance at our annual OT training event, as well as a very high number of first-time attendees who we were able to link up with activist development pathways in their regions.

UNISON continued to support the representation of BAOT at NHS Staff Council and the NHS SPF and includes BAOT members as full members for the purposes of pay claims, campaigns, ballots and industrial action.



UNISON/RCOT trade union development programme

The national BAOT stewards panel (made up of senior OT stewards from each UNISON region) held quarterly meetings during the year to discuss activist development, bargaining and campaigning issues relevant to BAOT members,

Managers in Partnership

Managers in Partnership (MiP), UNISON's national branch organising NHS managers, grew to over 7000 members for the first time in its 19-year history.

MiP members were involved in UNISON's industrial action campaigns in England and Wales in addition to supporting pay campaigns in Scotland and Northern Ireland. MiP also submitted evidence to the Senior Salaries Review Body which helped secure a pay rise for senior NHS staff in 2023.

Following the growth of our workplace rep base, MiP held its first in-person conference for reps in March, followed by another conference in November. MiP will continue to hold annual conferences for its growing rep base going forward in addition to its existing annual member summit.

After a pilot scheme in 2022, MiP launched its new streamlined member advice system in 2023. Member concerns are now triaged centrally with initial advice and referral as

required. MiP also reviewed its national officers' areas of responsibility following an analysis of member demographics, creating a new dedicated post to cover staff in NHS England.

MiP supported members throughout the year who faced national reorganisations in the NHS, including in the NHS arms-length bodies and the ongoing reorganisations of integrated care systems in England.

College of Operating Department Practitioners (CODP)

Since 2006, the College of Operating Department Practitioners has been a part of UNISON. While being part of a large, established organisation has enabled several successes for the College, there have also been some limitations. During 2022 the College consulted on becoming independent again, with its own governance arrangements to operate a separate membership. This was supported by the majority of Operating Department Practitioners (ODPs) who responded to the consultation and so, in 2024, the College will become independent again. UNISON continues to give full support to the CODP during this transition.

The College's professional council, education and standards committee and clinical university educators' forums met at regular intervals over the last 12 months and continued to promote the profession amongst members of the public and the healthcare colleagues.

European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)

The health team maintained our engagement with EPSU throughout 2023. Officers received regular updates and communications from European trade union colleagues and attended meetings of the Health and Social Services standing committee.

As mentioned in the section on HCAs, we continued to organise and lead a cross-European network of HCAs through EPSU. This network met twice in 2023, looking at vital areas like pay, regulation, education and training. UNISON HCA lay leaders attended and gained important information to assist in our campaigns and strategy in the UK.

Appendix 1

Key policy publications and submissions

- NHS Assembly / NHS England, NHS at 75: an invitation to have your say, consultation response (May 2023)
- Department for Health and Social Care, Consultation on Minimum Service Levels: ambulance services, consultation response (May 2023)
- Department of Health and Social Care, Care workforce pathway for adult social care: call for evidence, consultation response (May 2023)
- Support Guaranteed (Fabian Society report on the National Care Service), commissioned by UNISON (June 2023)
- Department for Business and Trade, Minimum Service Levels: issuing work notices (draft guidance), consultation response (September 2023)
- Home Office, Child sexual abuse: mandatory reporting, consultation response (November 2023)
- Department for Health and Social Care, Consultation on Minimum Service Levels: hospital services, consultation response (November 2023)
- Department for Health and Social Care, NHS Pension Scheme: member contributions phase 2 and miscellaneous amendments (November 2023)

Appendix 2

Membership of health group committees and UNISON staff

HSGE membership

Eastern

Joyce Aldridge
Samantha Hemraj
Paul Pearson

East Midlands

Lynn Booth
Andrea Dickens
Vacant

Greater London

Julie Cunnane
Janet Maiden
Beatrice Boateng

Northern

John Malcolm
Tanya Pretswell (vice-chair)
Maria Alberts

Northern Ireland

Deborah Yapicioz
Maura McKenna (vice-chair)
Jill Weir

North West

John Flannery
Vacant
Denise Williams

Scotland

Tam Hiddleston
Wilma Brown (chair)
Denise Wilson

South East

Steve Bell
Jane Lacey
Miranda Crawford

South West

Gareth Drinkwater
Aileen McLoughlin
Vacant

Cymru/Wales

Joseph Hale
Libby Nolan
Sharon Cawdell

West Midlands

Eddie Woolley
Jenny Harvey
Dawn Edwards

Yorkshire & Humberside

Adrian O'Malley
Denise Carr
Vacant

Ambulance

Bryn Webster

Nursing & Midwifery

Trudie Martin

Operational Services

Katie Hodgson

STAT

Gemma Jones

NEC

Michelle England
Jordan Rivera
James Anthony
Kevin Curran

BAOT observer

Karin Bishop
Leanne Weatherley

Occupational group committee membership

Ambulance

Eastern

Glenn Carrington

Greater London

Eddie Brand

Northern

Brian Dodds

Scotland

Richard Proctor/Kevin Stewart (job share)

South West

Jo Fowles (vice chair)

West Midlands

Peter Green

Co-optee

Tracy Jerrim

Reena Farrington

East Midlands

Stuart Hallows

North West

Jeff Gorman

Northern Ireland

Alastair Long

South East

Peter Steventon

Cymru/Wales

Damon Turner

Yorkshire & Humberside

Bryn Webster (chair)

Nursing and midwifery

East Midlands

Gamuchirai Nyasoro

Greater London

Annette Heslop

Northern

Miriam Mafemba

Scotland

Margo Cranmer

South West

Trudie Martin (chair)

West Midlands

Steve Jones (vice-chair)

Eastern

Oladipo Ogedengbe

North West

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Northern Ireland

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South East

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Cymru/Wales

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Anne Cherry

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Northern

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Scotland

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South West

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North West

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Northern

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Scotland

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South West

Vacant

West Midlands

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Eastern

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North West

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Northern Ireland

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South East

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Sara Gorton (part year)

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