



**Winning together in UNISON**

**Annual Report 2023—2024**

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## Contents

<b>General Secretary’s Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>	Health and Safety Campaigning	29
<b>President’s Foreword</b>	<b>6</b>	Pensions campaigning	30
<b>Chapter one – Speaking up for our members</b>	<b>8</b>	Devolved nation influencing and campaigning	31
Pay and disputes summary	8	Northern Ireland	31
Background	8	Scotland	33
Local Government	8	Cymru/Wales	33
NHS	8	Health	34
Higher Education	9	Local government priorities	34
Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges	10	Housing	34
Northern Ireland Education	10	Social Care	34
Police and Justice	10	Schools	35
Energy	10	Police and Justice	35
Water, Environment and Transport	11	Further Education and Higher Education	35
Campaigning Section	11	Labour Link	35
Social Care	11	Equality	36
Living Wage	12	Wales Union Learning Fund	36
Cost-of-living	12	Campaign Fund	36
Mileage rates	13	Labour Link	36
Criminal record checks	13	Key campaigns in health care	37
Preparing for the General Election	13	Race for Equality	37
Year of LGBT+ workers	15	One Team	37
Public Service and anti-cuts campaigning	15	Pay Fair for Patient Care	38
Climate Change	16	Local Government campaigning	38
General Update	16	SOS Funding and anti-cuts campaigning	38
The Strikes Act	17	Local Service Champions Campaigning	40
TUC March and Rally - protect the right to strike	18	Higher education campaigns	41
Employment law campaigning – wins and losses	18	School cuts	42
Post EU exit changes	18	Further Education	42
Trade Union Act 2016: new DOCAS regulations	19	Pay	43
Human Rights	19	Early Years	43
Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data use in the Public Services	20	Energy and the Cost of Living	43
International	20	Supporting our Energy members	43
Windrush, Migrant workers and refugees	21	The Energy Retail Market	44
Migrant workers	21	Energy Transmission and Distribution	44
Exploitation of migrant workers in the social care sector	21	Water, Environment and Transport (WET)	44
Asylum seekers and refugees	22	Environment Agencies (EA, NRW and SEPA)	44
Justice for the Windrush Generation	22	Pay	45
Procurement, Anti-Privatisation and Insourcing	22	Water Industry	45
The Covid-19 Public Inquiry	23	Transport Sector	45
Housing	24	Community service group	45
Equality	25	Police and Justice	47
Women Members	26	Campaigns	47
Black Members	27	Pay	47
Disabled Members	27	National Private Contractors Forum	47
LGBT+ Members	28		
Young Members	29		

<b>Chapter two – Supporting our branches</b>	<b>48</b>		
Membership 2023 Annual Line Count Process	48	UNISON College	61
Regional UNISON membership	48	Member learning	62
Movement – to support Industrial Action ballots	48	UNISON Living	62
Branch Support and Organising Fund	49	Quilter Financial and Mortgage Advisors	62
Branch Procurement Service	49	Shepherds Friendly	62
How to access the UNISON's Branch Procurement Service	49	National	63
CaseWeb system	50	Regional	63
An Expenses System for Branches	50	Branch	63
Branch access to the Campaign Fund	50	Direct	63
Bargaining Support	50	Challenges post covid period	63
Strategic Organising Unit (SOU)	51	Rewards	63
Organising to Win	51	Affinity partner activity/engagement with members, Branches and Regions	63
Merlin system replacing RMS	52	Annual marketing plan communications	64
Reasonable Adjustments at Conferences	52	Any new products/initiatives during 2023	64
Supporting Delegates at Conference	52	Planned activity/resources to capture potential growth/density	64
		Challenges post covid period	65
<b>Chapter Three – Supporting our members</b>	<b>53</b>	UNISON Dental and Health Plans – Insight	65
Member Engagement Programme	53	NHS dental news and insight	65
Better data and insights	53	LV	66
JCWI Immigration help-line	53	National Marketing	66
Organising migrant workers	53	Performance	66
Race Discrimination	54	Case Studies	66
Phase 1 – Data Collection	54	The Luton Airport Car Park Fire	66
Phase 2 –Considering Evidence and Recommendations	54	Sponsorship	66
Using the law to fight for our members	55	UNISON Croyde Bay Holiday Resort	67
Introduction	55	Professional Services Unit	68
Brazel – Legislation to overturn our Supreme Court win	55		
The ongoing fight for equal pay	55	<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>69</b>
Protecting members maternity rights	56	UNISON membership figures – 2023	69
Windrush Judicial review	56		
Mercer update – Awaiting Supreme Court Decision	56	<b>Appendix 2</b>	<b>69</b>
Success at the UK Supreme Court	57	2023 National Delegate Conference	69
Court judgment	57		
Legal Advice and Representation	57	<b>Appendix 3</b>	
Employment law representation and advice for members	57	Statistics due to Motion 9 from 2022	70
Legal assistance personal Injuries and accidents at work for members and their families	57		
Criminal law services for members	57		
Free Legal Advice	57		
Wills and Conveyancing	57		
Personal injury settlements	58		
Assaults at work	58		
Serious work-related diseases	58		
Road traffic accidents	58		
Total awards for members	58		
Industrial Action Ballot Summary	58		
UNISONdirect 2023	59		
There for You	60		

## General Secretary's Foreword

### Christina McAnea

Last year, UNISON celebrated 30 years of wins for public services and the fantastic workers delivering them. Activists and staff left National Delegate Conference (NDC) 2023 with the hope we could take on every new challenge thrown at us. And we needed that hope, because the Westminster government has continued its relentless attacks on working people, their unions and their rights, and their propaganda campaign of hate and division. Hope gave us the strength to keep challenging governments, forcing ministers to change decisions and the political landscape. It was also the driving force behind UNISON's Year of Black Workers and has continued to be so for 2024's Year of LGBT+ Workers.

We're preparing to have influence for any future government too. I led a delegation of activists and staff into negotiations with the Labour Party last summer. We influenced their manifesto and programme for government. Our demands on pay gaps, a National Care Service, repealing anti-trade union laws and enhanced workers' rights were just some of our successful demands. As 2024 is a general election year, the public service workers we represent have a big task, because it could be members casting the deciding votes on who gets the keys to No.10 Downing Street.

Before the current government's time in office comes to an inevitable end, UNISON is hopeful of winning our challenge to their Windrush decisions. The permission we've been granted to intervene in the Judicial Review, was achieved thanks to compelling witness statements from members and the formidable work of our legal team. If the Westminster government was capable of learning lessons from past mistakes, we wouldn't have to take this action. Just like its slow action on NHS pay in 2022/23, that led to unprecedented industrial action, it's at risk of making the same mistakes again.

The dispute, of course, was still dragging on in Northern Ireland until earlier this year. It took a final, very cold, 24 hours in Belfast to force the return of politicians to Stormont and to sort out public sector pay. UNISON's health, social care and education members joined other union members in a day of mass strike action. I was there for a midnight walk out at the Royal Victoria Hospital. I spoke to members on picket lines on the Falls Road and joined thousands to march on to Belfast City Hall.

The momentum building in healthcare assistant re-banding campaigns, from the Wirral to Leicestershire, and from Teesside to Bedfordshire, and UNISON's dispute with private outsourcing companies like Mitie in Dudley, are all a symptom of the stresses and strains our NHS is under. A new government needs to fix the mess our NHS is in and create a National Care Service that will also relieve pressure on hospitals and primary healthcare.

Alongside the Labour Party's commitment, we've got politicians to individually sign our pledge to create that service and any incoming government has a roadmap to deliver it. Support Guaranteed – A Roadmap to Creating a National Care Service, our report we commissioned the Fabien's Society to produce, details how to get there. But until that radical change has been achieved, UNISON is still working hard to support care workers. I've joined councils



as they've celebrated signing up to UNISON's Ethical Care Charter and opened up a national debate about the exploitation of migrant care workers.

Local government workers and the communities they support have been facing the challenges of their councils going bust. UNISON has been with them every step of the way, working hard to save jobs and save services. Scottish activists stood firm to win regarding pay, thanks to targeted strikes in refuse collection and schools – proof that strategic action returns big results. And throughout the past year, it's been a privilege to meet inspiring members and activists in every region and nation. Whether it's in ambulance stations, special schools, council buildings or out marching for the right to strike in Cheltenham, it's members' campaigns that are the lifeblood of our union.

UNISON's international work has continued at pace too. On behalf of our union, I've made representations to Ministers and Ambassadors urging their countries to respect the right to trade unionism. I had to abandon plans to visit Palestine when the heinous acts of October 7 occurred, and the appalling situation now in Gaza and Israel is beyond heartbreaking. I'm proud of UNISON's continued calls for an immediate ceasefire and peace talks that result in the end of the occupation of Palestine alongside a secure Israel.

I hope, that by NDC 2025, we will be meeting in more peaceful times. I hope that wars will come to an end, and that we have less chaos and division at home. What we need is an end to Conservative rule, and a serious Labour government in Westminster that puts public services at the heart of their economic agenda. But we also need to stick with our top priority of organising and growing our union - making sure members voices are heard loud and clear, everywhere. NDC 2024 will set us up with the tools we need to improve working lives and to make society a better place, at home and abroad, because UNISON's impact has no limits.

In solidarity,

**Christina McAnea**  
UNISON General Secretary

## President's Foreword

### Libby Nolan

I am proud to have been a part of leading UNISON for the last year, in what I hope is the end of 14 years of suffering for UNISON members.

We are a union of public service workers, working for communities and supporting the vulnerable, and yet our pay is falling behind as many are pushed further into hardship. The Tories have been determined to break our unions and we have responded with resourcefulness and determination. You have shown in your branches a renewed sense of members' power. With the support of the NEC, many more members across our sectors are either taking industrial action or planning industrial action. Standing up, fighting back and resisting.

Our movement is fighting for better pay and terms and conditions. UNISON members are taking more industrial action and despite the Tory thresholds are winning. I have been proud to stand on your picket lines in solidarity. Activists are the life blood of the union, and - it's not only our membership growing but our organising through activism.

UNISON is a lay member led union in which members have a say on what our policies and rules are. The shop floor is in charge. The union must work together to achieve what our members want by being accountable to our membership, who not only pay subs, but work voluntarily for the wins. We must never forget that.

Attacks on our rights, freedoms and pay restraint strategies have harmed almost all UNISON members, with in-work poverty meaning members have to use food banks and suffer the impact of poverty on their health. We recently saw the THERE FOR YOU winter fuel allowance lines open. The first round of cash was gone within 4 minutes, while the second round lasted 6 minutes. It is a great resource for our members, a safety net, but we must double down on our efforts to lift our members out of poverty by fighting for decent pay, so they don't have to rely on winter fuel and school uniform grants.

Your work, the work of reps and stewards, is the most

important part of our trade union movement. That is where we do the job of the trade union in protecting jobs, terms and conditions and improving pay. The bread and butter of why we organise and build activism. So, thank you for everything you do.

In the last 12 months we have developed our union with your organising to win strategy, seeing numbers of activists swell, especially in areas where the threat of or actual industrial action has taken place.

We have not had this current level of strike action in UNISON's history as our members become confident their union is supporting them in fighting back. The many successful strikes leading to further action and wins, and influence wins for other unions. We have seen that trade union solidarity growing. All wins that UNISON activists have delivered are fair and deliver justice for our members, while the Tories reacted to the rise in strike action across all unions by wanting to break the trade union movement, bringing in more anti-trade union laws with the Minimum Service Levels (MSL) Legislation in the 2023 Strikes Act. For over 150 years, trade unions have fought for safer workplaces, better pay, and conditions, and the MSL Act is a direct attack on working peoples' rights to fair pay, and decent work with the intention of further eroding the fundamental right to strike. As you would expect, UNISON has been fighting the MSL plans all the way.

Highlighting the failures of government policy and speaking out for these laws to be dumped as soon as possible.

The Labour Party have promised that the MSL will be repealed in the first 100 days. We need to use our Labour-Link to make sure that promise is upheld. As a trade union we will have to prepare for further fights even with an incoming Labour Party government. We will have to remind the Labour Party that they were created from us and for us. We want to see a return of Labour Party politicians to our picket lines because our union is not the enemy.

Equality is a priority for UNISON and in 2023 we came together to celebrate the Year of The Black Worker. This was an extremely successful year that leaves a legacy for Black members.

In 2024 we celebrate the Year of LGBT+ Worker and we learn that their history is rooted in resistance and activism within the trade union movement. In response to violence and murder, 2024 opens with recognition that our Trans

comrades are in the headlights of the most disgusting media hate in their history fuelling Transphobia and trans hate.

I ask all union members to access Trans training and stand with our Trans comrades in solidarity. In 2024 our LGBT+ comrades will shine a light on the inequalities they experience. And each of us have to be true to our trade union beliefs and be stood shoulder to shoulder as allies to our comrades.

And I could not write this annual report without mentioning the bombardment of Gaza and the reaction to the October 7 atrocities that fuelled Israel's onslaught into Gaza, and the many marches and demonstrations that UNISON members have been a part of coming together to demand an end to the killing and demand an end to the horrific scenes we have watched in the last 5 months.

In solidarity with Palestinians, this year's International Women's Day recognised that the majority of those who have been killed are women and children. As a health worker I have witnessed hospitals, and fellow health workers seen as legitimate targets alongside journalists as well as innocent civilians.

The ICJ ruling has to date been ignored by Israel. We must not stop speaking about Palestine. The international trade union movement are united in their condemnation of Israel's actions. I have been proud to represent UNISON speaking on many platforms calling for an end to the killing, an immediate ceasefire, humanitarian aid and rebuilding of Gaza and a solution for peace.

And for all the work that UNISON members and activists do outside the workplace, organising and their involvement in our affiliated groups such as Stand Up To Racism, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Show Racism The Red Card and many more. This highlights UNISON's policies and members' wishes. UNISON is at the forefront of fighting injustice and influencing change here.

We can't forget the obscenity of Sunak betting £1000 with Piers Morgan that he would have deported people to Rwanda before the general election. This is yet to happen due in large to activists. We know the real problem travels on a luxury yacht, not a leaking dinghy. And I know I have more in common with the passenger in the dingy than those in the yachts! We will continue to do everything we can to fight this racist Tory Rwanda deportation scheme, and make

Sunak lose his bet. We say it loud and clear: refugees and asylum seekers are welcome here.

Solidarity.

**Libby Nolan**  
**President of UNISON**

## Chapter one

# Speaking up for our members

## – campaigns and service groups

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### Pay and disputes summary

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#### Background

As last year went on, the waves of high profile national industrial action came to an end or were paused due to agreed pay settlements or political change such as the welcome re-introduction of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

However, considerable local industrial action continued, such as UNISON driven Healthcare Assistant re-banding claims flaring up across the NHS. Elsewhere organisers and activists were busy ensuring national deals were properly implemented locally and rolled over to contractors where appropriate.

Inflation has been dropping since the Winter of 2023, but last year's cost of living rises bit heavily into workers' purchasing power and justified the strong industrial stance we took, and higher level pay deals we reached.

Looking to learn lessons from the increased industrial action towards the end of the period, the 'Winning for the Future' project was established to improve dispute performance and normalise use of ballots within our large and complex industrial bargaining groups.

At the time of writing many national pay rounds for 2024/25 have begun with some good early settlements in parts of the private sector and claims being submitted and arguments being prepared for the forthcoming hard-nosed national negotiations elsewhere.

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#### Local Government

The employers final offer was a £1,925 pay increase on all pay points from April 2023 covering NJC staff across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This was equivalent to 9.42% at the bottom of the pay spine and 3.88% at the top.

The NJC Committee voted to recommend rejection of the pay

offer and ballot of members for industrial action, which was run on a disaggregated basis between May and July 2023.

On receiving the results and in consultation with regions, the NJC Committee took the decision not to pursue industrial action, as it was felt that the ballot did not provide sufficient mandates in enough significantly sized employers, despite an exhaustive campaign. NJC pay for 2023 was finally settled in November 2023, with backpay sought as quickly as possible.

The 2024 pay claim was submitted in March, seeking an increase of at least £3,000 or 10% (whichever is the greater) on all spinal column points, alongside reaching a minimum of £15 an hour within a maximum of two years, a two-hour reduction in the working week and an extra day's leave.

In Scotland, COSLA made a 5% pay offer on all SJC pay points from April 2023, with additional sums varying from application of the Living Wage rate at the bottom of the pay scale and increases between 2.5% and 1% across the remainder of the pay scale from January 2024. In a consultative ballot, 87% voted to reject the offer, with 90% in favour of taking action up to and including strike action. Targeted strike action was taken across 24 out of 32 councils as part of the dispute.

In September, COSLA made a revised offer of a minimum full year £2,006 increase in annual salary for those on the Scottish Local Government Living Wage and a minimum of £1,929 for all those above from April 2023.

In November, COSLA put forward further improvements, including a stronger commitment to achieve a minimum underpinning rate of £15 per hour and an additional £17.2m to backdate all elements of the offer for all back to April 2023.

The revised offer was consulted on and accepted by members by almost 70%.

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#### NHS

In England, the dispute on 2022 pay, which stretched into 2023, resulted in a settlement negotiated through the NHS Staff Council on top of the £1,400 flat rate Pay Review Body 2022-23 recommendation. The additional money comprised of: a lump sum addition worth between £1,655 and £3,789; a 5% consolidated award for 2023/24 on all pay points



except the lowest point where there was a 10% uplift to take the hourly rate above the then real Living Wage; and commitments to progress a number of ‘non-pay’ elements.

The ‘non-pay’ commitments were progressed through workstreams including Staff Council-led work to negotiate a pay preservation clause for in-service apprenticeships, bolster job evaluation capacity and initiate a review of the pay-setting process.

Following the settlement in England, a number of disputes have been launched and won under the Us2 campaign banner to extend this agreement to staff indirectly employed to deliver NHS services.

In Northern Ireland, the absence of a Minister and an Executive over recent years led UNISON to call on the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to release funds that would allow pay parity with England.

After five periods of strike action there is now an offer of 5% for 2023/24 and a £1,505 consolidated payment to close out a 2022/23 settlement. This offer is going to consultative ballot.

In Scotland, a pay offer was accepted from April 2023 that saw the majority of Scotland’s health workers receive a one-off payment of at least £387 plus at least a 6.5% pay rise.

The NHS unions also made recommendations in November as part of the 2023/24 pay process which sought to amend some aspects of Agenda for Change. Consequently, agreement was reached on protected learning time for training, a review of Band 5 nursing posts and a reduction in the standard working week to 37 hours from 1 April 2024 working towards a standard 36-hour week in future pay years.

In Wales, members voted to accept an offer of a 5% wage increase from April 2023 across most pay points (7.8% for the lowest paid, taking them significantly above the real Living Wage) and an additional one-off payment for 2022/23 – between £900 and £1,190.

The deal also included ‘non-pay’ proposals covering areas such as: reinstating unsocial hours payments after the first week of sickness, reviewing career progression, flexible working, exploration of the reduction of the working week to 36 hours, reduction of the use of agency staff, A retention strategy and an all-Wales retire and return policy.

The All-Wales Partnership Forum Business Committee set up tripartite groups to drive forward objectives to cover all of the non-pay points.

UNISON continued to call on the government to enter direct talks on the 2024/25 round. But while the Secretary of State agreed to a dialogue with Agenda for Change unions about earnings-related issues during the round, December also saw the start of a Pay Review Body process for England which is expected to be mirrored for Northern Ireland and Wales.

In November, using evidence collected from an extensive survey of member priorities, it was agreed to pull together a UNISON NHS pay campaign for 2024/25 based on three broad areas – a proper pay rise, action on pay banding and a shorter working week – issues which are being prioritised across all four UK structures.

A staff side claim has been submitted for 2024/25 within the auspices of the Scottish Terms and Conditions Committee.

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## Higher Education

After the 2022-23 pay dispute the pressure of five local deals and the other unions joining our strike action in late 2022 led to the employers association UCEA opening pay talks for 2023-24 early and making an offer which included early payment of a portion of the annual increase due in August 2023.

UNISON members were consulted and responded with an 82% rejection, so UNISON, along with the other four recognised trade unions, went into dispute with UCEA over 2023-24 pay.

Conciliation talks brokered by ACAS ended in an impasse. A new, very slightly improved pay offer of between 5 and 8% depending on spinal column point, was imposed by UCEA, with part added to annual salaries (£1000 or 2%, whichever was the greater) backdated to 1 February 2023, and the remainder payable from August 2023.

A further targeted UNISON ballot focused on fourteen Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with a high chance of winning before the summer break. Nine HEIs achieved a mandate and took strike action during the exams/assessment season from June.

A subsequent targeted ballot of another 28 HEIs saw 13 achieve a mandate, making a total of 23 HEIs covered by a mandate at some point in 2023. Three of these HEIs branches won local deals on non-consolidated payments or changes to grading structures to improve pay and pay-related conditions without undermining the national pay scale.

Coordinated strike action took place at the start of the autumn term in Scotland during September and in England during October, with some extra local strike days at some HEIs and protests over pay and rallies in HEIs without a mandate.

Continued action saw the employers return to the table in autumn to discuss a joint independent review of sector finances, which is expected to take at least a year to complete. All parties also agreed to a re-examination of the ACAS terms of reference on pay-related items with the aim of getting those negotiations started.

A joint pay claim has been submitted for 2024-25, calling for an increase of RPI +2% or £2,500, whichever is the greater; a commitment to restore lost pay; a new minimum pay rate of £15 an hour; and all institutions to become Foundation Living Wage employers.

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### Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges

In England, many colleges followed the 6.5% Association of Colleges recommendation, and those offers were accepted by members.

In Scotland, a statutory ballot on a 2% pay offer resulted in a vote to reject and strike action has subsequently taken place.

In Wales, an offer of 5% to all staff was accepted and paid to members.

In Northern Ireland, NJC pay, terms and conditions apply.

In Sixth Form Colleges, members accepted a pay offer of a 6.5% increase on all pay spine points and allowances, plus consolidation of the annual historic performance award.

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### Northern Ireland Education

UNISON education support service members employed by the Education Authority have taken action arising from an ongoing dispute on failure to complete a review of the NJC pay agreement which governs pay structure across the Education Authority. Further detail on Northern Ireland industrial action can be found in the regional reports section.

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### Police and Justice

In England and Wales, members voted to accept a 7% increase on all pay points from September 2023. In Scotland, members voted to accept a £1,900 uplift to salary points for those earning up to and including £26,783 and a 7% uplift to salary points for those earning above from April 2023.

In the National Probation Service for England and Wales, the Ministry of Justice paid a £1,500 lump sum non-consolidated award to all Probation Service staff in line with the award made to all civil servants in July 2023.

The three probation unions submitted a claim to re-open the three-year pay award (2023 was year two of the award). In December the Probation Service responded that it was not willing to re-open negotiations. UNISON's Police and Justice Conference passed an emergency motion to explore all options to bring the employer back to the negotiating table, including possibly registering a dispute and conducting a consultative ballot of members on their willingness to take some form of industrial action in support of the claim. Discussions with other probation unions on consultative ballots were ongoing.

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### Energy

UNISON pay agreements over the year included: Eon - 5.75% increase from January 2023, alongside a one-off unconsolidated cash lump sum of £1,350;

- Cadent - From July 2023 pay rates and allowances were increased by a percentage amount equal to the average of RPI (Retail Prices Index) inflation for the 12 months up to and including March 2023;
- Ovo - 5% increase from July 2023;
- Siemens Managed Services - Increases ranging from

10.63% at the bottom end of the scale to 5% at the top from January 2024;

- Fulcrum - 5% increase from July 2023;
- UK Gas Transmission - 9.5% consolidated increase and guaranteed bonus of 3% non-consolidated from July 2023.

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## Water, Environment and Transport

UNISON pay agreements over the year have included the following:

- Severn Trent Water - 7.5% consolidated pay award from July 2023;
- Thames Water - A 7% consolidated increase back dated to July 2023;
- Scottish Canals – Two-year deal accepted that will deliver 5% from April 2023, 2% from January 2024, 2% from April 2024 and 1% from January 2025;
- Scottish Water – Strike action led to an 8% pay offer, a new pay and grading structure. An improved offer hanged the whole pay structure that will reduce the working week from 37 to 35 hours;
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency - Two-year deal that will deliver 5% from April 2023, 2% from January 2024, 2% from April 2024 and 1% from January 2025, as well as two additional days of annual leave;
- Environment Agency - Following members taking strike action for the first time over the 2022/23 pay deal, the agency made an improved offer in November 2023 of 6.35%. This was an additional 1.35% to the 4.5% plus 0.5% within the 2023/24 Civil Service Pay Guidance. Members accepted the offer in December, with payment backdated to July 2023;
- Transport – The three employers (West Yorkshire Combined Authority, West Midlands Combined Authority and Transport for Greater Manchester) covered by the national bargaining framework mirror the Local Government NJC settlement, which meant £1,925 for all pay points in 2023/24. Passenger Transport Executive members were balloted and accepted the pay award, implemented with back pay to April 2023.

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## Campaigning Section

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### Social Care

The UNISON “Let’s Make Care Work” campaign for a National Care Service in England is now fully established and is making a significant impact on the political landscape in the run up to a general election. In June 2023, the UNISON commissioned report (with help from the Campaign Fund) from the Fabian Society ‘Support Guaranteed’ set out a plan to build a national care service, receiving extensive media coverage and comment. The report was welcomed by the Labour front bench. UNISON had significant influence over the Labour Party National Policy Forum wording on social care, which included “Labour will deliver a long-term plan for reform of adult social care that will lead to a world-class National Care Service that makes people as proud as the NHS does.” The commitment includes the promise to deliver a Fair Pay Agreement in social care – this would be the first set of national standards for pay in social care in a sector which is notoriously fragmented and focused on profit.

Let’s Make Care Work’ branding and information was the primary focus of the UNISON stand at the Labour Party Conference. UNISON spent the week talking to Labour members and politicians about the need for a National Care Service. Christina McAnea spoke in the social care debate at Labour Conference, making the case for a National Care Service. Following conference, discussions continued with Labour over the content of their plans for social care. In February 2024, the Fabians hosted a National Care Service Summit at UNISON Centre, funded by the UNISON Campaign Fund. The event was attended by stakeholders from across the social care sector, Wes Streeting MP (Shadow Sec. of State for Health and Social Care), Andrew Gwynne MP (Shadow Care Minister), UNISON social care members and the General Secretary. The event invited views on how to make a National Care Service work and built on the Fabian report ‘Support Guaranteed’.

The following day, UNISON held a Parliamentary reception to launch the pledge card element of the campaign. This is a campaign asking prospective parliamentary candidates to be photographed holding up a UNISON pledge board showing support for a National Care Service. At the time of writing more than 70 Labour Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) had done so and more are adding

their support every day. The pledge card campaign launch was supported with model local press releases, a national release and a model letter to local newspapers. There is evidence that the ‘Let’s Make Care Work’ campaign is having a positive influence on recruitment and retention of social care members in England, with significant rises in membership in England seen in the early months of 2024.

Also in social care, UNISON continues to receive reports via branches and regions of the exploitation of migrant workers in the care sector. These include unlawful demands for repayment of funds where workers raise concerns about working conditions and care workers being told they must stay on site at care homes, even when they are not on shift. In December 2023, UNISON wrote a joint letter (with the National Care Forum) to James Cleverly MP with the National Care Forum objecting to changes in visa rules and demanding more action is taken over migrant care worker exploitation. UNISON has also written to every Councillor in the UK giving them a guide on how to check for migrant worker exploitation for services commissioned by their council. We continue to provide support for all migrant workers’ members regarding employment and immigration law.

Additionally, in December 2023, the Service Group Liaison Committee approved a 17-month project to develop regional and national lay member structures populated by social care members in England, addressing a democratic deficit which might otherwise risk undermining UNISON’s work in the sector. Regions in England have now held successful regional social care network meetings. These included presentations and discussion on the ‘Let’s Make Care Work’ campaign. The first national social care committee meetings will be held in September 2024.

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## Living Wage

The Living Wage has continued to form an important target in wage bargaining across the union, particularly where low pay is most heavily concentrated among contractors delivering public services. The advance of the wage across the economy goes on, with over 14,000 employers signed up as accredited employers, including almost 900 public sector employers, assisted by such high profile commitments as the Welsh Government’s plans to deliver the Living Wage in social care over 2023. The gap between the highest National Minimum Wage (NMW) rate and the Living Wage has been diminishing as the NMW has closed

on two-thirds of average earnings, but the Living Wage continues to translate into a salary worth over £1,000 more for a full-time worker on a 37-hour week. UNISON developed a fresh set of campaigning materials and bargaining guidance to support branches and regions over Living Wage Week, when the new Living Wage rates were announced. Numerous breakthroughs have been achieved by local branches to pull members up to the Living Wage and the lessons from a sample of these victories have been added as case studies for the bargaining guidance.

The cost-of-living crisis has highlighted the vital importance of minimum pay rates that are linked to inflation, so UNISON’s evidence to the Low Pay Commission continued to make the case for raising the NMW to the Living Wage rate and bringing the youth rates up to the full adult rate, as part of a drive to achieving £15 an hour.

UNISON published a collection of essays on the future of the minimum wage in December 2023 and held an event in Parliament in April 2024 to promote ideas around how it can be strengthened. The collection included contributions from a range of fellow stakeholders. The starting point for the collection was the recognition that the minimum wage was on target to reach the target of two thirds of median by 2024 – and that now was the time to consider where it went next. This initiative was taken in response to motion 46 passed at National Delegate Conference in 2022 and showed UNISON’s continued leadership on this important policy area

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## Cost-of-living

The cost-of-living crisis continues to be a scandal that is decimating household budgets. Over the past year, prices have continued to rise while wages have stagnated, and the economy has nosedived. Inequality has widened and public services have continued to see their budgets cut and their ability to help those most in need curtailed. The crisis continues to define the experience of public sector workers and low paid households for many years to come, and no end is in sight. Polling shows that the cost-of-living is one of the most critical issues for voters at the election.

UNISON has written to the Chancellor and highlighted the cost-of-living crisis facing members ahead of fiscal events, while keeping members informed of how changes in Westminster affect them. UNISON organised a webinar for members during financial resilience week to talk about the cost-of-living crisis and issues to campaign on.

Following a member survey that identified closing the loopholes in windfall taxes for oil and gas giants as a top priority for UNISON members in tackling the cost-of-living crisis, UNISON's petition attracted over 76,000 signatures and was handed into the Treasury in Autumn 2023.

UNISON has worked with charities and faith organisations to establish a new movement, Let's End Poverty, which is a diverse, growing movement of people who are united behind a vision for a UK where poverty can't keep anyone down. The movement seeks to mobilise communities and provide a platform to people with lived experience of poverty and the cost-of-living crisis to enable them to lead local campaigns for change. UNISON members were speakers at a recent webinar to share their experiences of in-work poverty and zero hours contracts.

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## Mileage rates

UNISON has continued to lobby both MPs and HMRC to rectify unfair mileage rates. It's wrong that one in five UNISON members in frontline roles are left out of pocket each year for using their own car to do their jobs.

UNISON undertook detailed research into the issue of public sector workers impacted by unfair mileage rates and published original research in partnership with the RAC Foundation. This research triggered a Westminster Hall debate in parliament with UNISON's research directly quoted by MPs from Labour, Conservative and other parties. UNISON and the RAC Foundation hosted a roundtable for MPs involving members who travelled from across the UK to share their experiences as part of the report's launch. The report was discussed in a number of media outlets including the Independent, Evening Standard, Daily Mail and Politico.

UNISON has supported thousands of members to write to their MPs: over 20,000 emails have been sent to MPs as part of this campaign. The issue was the cover story for UNISON's members' magazine and members' stories were shared on UNISON's website. Tailored training on campaigning skills was delivered to members who have engaged in the campaign to enable them to continue campaigning in their own branches and workplaces.

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## Criminal record checks

Many members are seeing their wages deducted to cover the cost of essential criminal record checks. UNISON is clear that this is a cost that should be covered by the employer, not the employees.

UNISON undertook a survey of over 10,000 members which showed that:

- among the 6000 responding members in the Health Service Group, over 50% had had to pay from their own pocket for criminal records checks;
- among early years workers, 46% of 139 respondents had had to pay; among social care workers, 45% of the 1250 respondents had had to pay;
- among private contractors, 41% of the 248 respondents had had to pay. UNISON published a report of the findings and organised a roundtable in parliament for its launch, hosted by Shadow Minister Liz Twist MP. Members who have been impacted by charges for criminal record checks attended and shared their experiences. UNISON has written to MPs to raise the issue further and ask for them to take action.

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## Preparing for the General Election

A planning day was held by the Campaign Fund Committee in early January. Representatives from the National Labour Link Committee and regional campaign contacts took part. The campaign plan being implemented at the time of going to press has four strands of activity: supporting the Labour Party through Labour Link, member communication, public persuasion through advertising and media work and support for activists.

The May 2024 local, mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner elections have been approached, not just as important in their own right, but also as a key milestone on the road to the General Election. Activity across all the campaign strands has included an initial focus on the May elections.

An important concern has been with the new requirement, introduced by the Westminster government, for voters to show particular forms of photo ID before being issued with their ballot at the polling station. When trialed at the 2023 local elections, this blatant piece of voter suppression resulted in higher numbers of younger, Black and disabled voters being turned away. Materials have been produced

highlighting this requirement and encouraging members to register for a postal vote. 2023 Year of Black Workers

UNISON's Year of Black Workers (YOBW) campaign was launched at the national Black members conference in January 2023, with the mission statement "Establishing Legacy to Generate Change" setting the overarching strategic intent.

The two main themes under this banner were 'legacy' and 'change,' which have provided the focus for campaign activity.

The campaign has drawn on specific campaigns to change the workplace, and wider society, which the National Black Members Committee (NBMC) was already involved in, and it reflected ongoing work on race equality in the service groups. It set outcomes for branches and regions as a focal point for change.

YOBW saw the NBMC expand their work programme to develop initiatives to organise for race equality, challenge racism in the workplace across the UK. and 'establish a legacy to generate change'. The committee worked with branches, service groups, regions, national self-organised groups, and national committees throughout the year developing and delivering the campaign.

UNISON produced a suite of negotiating and bargaining guides in 2023, held events to promote the YOBW campaign throughout 2023, and produced the YOBW toolkit to help galvanise grassroots support and empower members to contact legislators, as well as calling for mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting.

Campaign activities have been varied across the union with variable outcomes. It will require further analysis to identify how successful the impact of the YOBW has been across union structures from branches, service groups, regions, self-organised and national committees. However, there are stand-out achievements, sign up to UNISON's Anti-Racism Charter in particular.

NBMC unanimously agreed to promote the Anti-Racism Charter pledge as part of the Year of Black Workers across all regions. NBMC believe the Anti-Racism Charter is an excellent toolkit and is pleased to see that it is being rolled out in regions, with organisations and employers committing to champion a racially diverse workforce and introduce tangible outcomes within a 12-month period of signing the charter.

Another stand-out achievement is how YOBW has provided an effective platform to recruit and organise Black members. There has been a particular focus to recruit and engage more young Black workers and retired Black members, which continues.

This year's national Black members conference saw an increase in delegates from 365 in 2023, to 467 in 2024, an increase of young Black members from 4 in 2023 to 15 in 2024, with an overall attendance of over 700 people for the duration of the conference.

The nature of the debate around immigration and the hostile environment with growing right-wing rhetoric has underlined the importance of UNISON's priority of challenging racism and discrimination in every form, in wider society as well as the workplace.

YOBW helped members have those broader conversations about racism that is deep rooted in society. All of this, layered on top of a history of institutional racism, helped focus the union on tackling discrimination and undertaking work around equality and equity, informed by the lived experiences of Black workers. NBMC has been able to ensure that race equality is at the heart of UNISON's work.

UNISON has worked in partnership with Dianne Greyson's #EthnicityPayGapUK campaign and engaged successfully with both prominent MP's and Peers. We have used opportunities in Parliament, such as questions and debates to ask the Government to work for mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting.

NBMC has engaged with the TUC Race Relations Committee and TUC Anti-Racism Taskforce, to raise broader awareness of our Year of Black workers Campaign.

NBMC has also engaged with Runnymede Trust and the Fawcett Society's new advisory board following the 'Broken ladder' research report launched in May 2022, to prioritise influencing policymakers on the report's key recommendations on ethnicity pay gap reporting, 'Stand up to Racism, Show Racism the Red Card' are also key groups NBMC has worked with.

NBMC is delighted that in the run up to the next General Election, the Labour Party have given a commitment to make Ethnicity Pay Gap mandatory if they are elected to form a government.

NBMC has been innovative in communicating the campaign on social media and using podcasts. Local Government Podcasts Episode 3 with Manjula Kumari and Sandra Charles.

The NBMC are keen to collate information and monitoring of sign-up across regions, including any barriers faced. The NBMC hope there will be an opportunity to review and map problem areas and best practice and work with the various sectors within UNISON to advance the charter. This has been highlighted in the memorabilia booklet launched at the national Black members conference in January 2024.

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## Year of LGBT+ workers

This year marks fifty years since Howard Hyman, a member of the NALGO Nottingham health branch wrote in the union magazine 'Public Service' that "I can't be the only one..." and established the NALGO gay group. We have come a long way as a union in those 50 years and we are delighted that 2024 marks UNISON's year of LGBT+ workers.

The national LGBT+ committee, working closely with regional LGBT+ groups, have devised a campaign plan for the year.

We have five key objectives we want to achieve this year: Have a majority of UNISON branches running a trans ally training session by the end of 2024.

- 1 Only a quarter of UNISON branches have an LGBT+ officer – we need more! We want to see at least 40% of branches have one by the end of 2024.
- 2 Negotiate more inclusive policies in workplaces. We have our trans equality model policy that can be negotiated as is by employers and a checklist for you to assess if your workplace policies are inclusive for LGBT+ workers.
- 3 More young LGBT+ people getting involved in our self-organised group through the national young LGBT+ network. We currently have 300 members. We'd like to have 500 members as part of our network by the end of this year.
- 4 Grow our regional LGBT+ self-organised groups and increase activism within them, with at least a 10% increase in the number of activists coming to meetings.

Many of these objectives build on the already successful

campaigns run by the LGBT+ national committee – namely the trans equality campaign and young LGBT+ workers' campaign. We have trained over 4,000 members on how to be a good trans ally and have over 70 trans, non-binary and gender diverse members trained on how to run the trans ally training that are ready to deliver these sessions to as many branches as possible! The national LGBT+ committee have a range of materials for members to use throughout the year to celebrate within their workplaces, branches, and regions. Our workplace policy checklist will assist branches in assessing whether their workplace policies are as LGBT+ inclusive as they can be. This will give us the information we need to do two things – firstly to assess where our gold standard employers are, so we can use them as a case study to advocate the benefits of inclusive workplaces. Secondly, it will allow us to know where workplaces need more work and support to get their policies in line with UNISON recommendations. We have also updated all our factsheets, guidance, model policies and branding for the year to support the work branches can do throughout the year.

We also want to build a more inclusive union for all and explore meaningful actions that create greater inclusion for our non-binary and gender diverse members at all levels of the union with all sections of UNISON. This means identifying and removing all unnecessary gendered language from UNISON material and hopefully our rule book!

We will also use the year to lobby for LGBT+ equality in this general election year. We will continue to advocate for complete and inclusive ban on conversion therapy practices, reform to the gender recognition act and creating safer workplaces for all LGBT+ members.

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## Public Service and anti-cuts campaigning

As part of the union's campaigning against the rise in the cost of living there was a complementary message that public services need to be rebuilt after over a decade of austerity. At a local level public bodies and other employers are still cutting jobs and services and the NEC, regions and service groups are supporting branches oppose cuts wherever possible. There has been an increase in local authorities declaring section 114 notices for only essential spending and this is worrying to all concerned. The value of public services and those who provide them is acknowledged in opinion polling, but politicians and decision makers need to invest and stop the cuts. Our Campaign

Fund is supporting the campaign activities at all levels. See later section on Local Government cuts campaigning.

## Climate Change

### General Update

Climate change policy in public services is inextricably linked to policies on public health, the cost-of-living crisis, education and skills and almost all other areas of public policy, and UNISON has committed to engaging politically with current and prospective governments on ensuring the necessary changes and funding needed to meet their commitments.

UNISON has members across all public services, and all are affected directly or indirectly by climate change.

UNISON members are engaging on this issue in all regions and devolved nations and UNISON aims to encourage and enable that engagement where it is already happening and to encourage our members to get active and involved in the transformations and negotiations that need to happen at all levels.

Over the last year UNISON has:

- continued to attend and engage in cross-union climate coalition meetings via the TUC as well as other key partner organisations like the Climate Justice Coalition;
- championed the new rule book position of environment officer (also known as green reps) in each branch – officer numbers more than doubled in 2023;
- started work on a Tool-Kit for bargaining / negotiating a green transition in the Public Sector (in partnership with the Bargaining Unit and hoping to be ready in time to launch at NDC);
- commissioned research on Greening Social Care (following a successful campaign Fund bid) looking specifically at what's needed to enable care workers to withstand local initiatives on climate change that will impact their roles – local traffic initiatives aimed at reducing pollution and carbon emissions will mean longer journeys between service users and a push to electric vehicles that the workforce cannot afford;
- continued to support a regional Green UNISON contacts network (meeting bi-monthly to share updates and good practice);
- continued the national Green UNISON Network for regular updates on what UNISON is doing in this area and how to get involved – aiming for a minimum of quarterly

- newsletters (nine newsletters were sent in 2023);
- publicised the new guidance on being a green rep and how to get involved;
- reviewed and adapted training modules for activists via UNISON College;
- added Green UNISON promotional materials to the UNISON catalogue so Branches can promote our work in this area;
- run a discrete project (training and a six-week challenge) with Larger Us (via TUC introduction) – on how to have better climate change conversations. The project was being run with just three organisations with UNISON being the only trade union. It aims to research what works and what doesn't for holding meaningful conversations about climate change that might move people from inaction to engagement and action. UNISON was excited to partner with Larger Us on this project and believe we were a good fit for this model, not least in recognition that our normal organising conversations approach (which works excellently for terms and conditions and other political campaigns) may not work for this topic given the existential nature of the threat. It is anticipated that this will then lead onto wider work from Larger Us on refining the conversations model;
- been involved in supporting guidance from Protect (A whistleblowing charity that UNISON has worked with previously) on its guide to Environmental Whistleblowing;
- ran a well-attended workshop at the 2023 Young Members Conference;
- published a Greening the Workplace Checklist for Branches to use as an initial approach to employers;
- engaged with Shadow Energy and Climate Change ministers aiming to influence the political debate in this area as part of preparing for the General Election 2024 process;
- co-hosted a workshop with Swedish Public Sector trade union Vision at the Public Services International Conference in Geneva on what we are doing to encourage climate change to be recognised as a core bargaining agenda issue in public sector employers. Green UNISON Week

This happens every year in late September with the aim of coinciding with the Fridays For the Future (FFF) global youth movement and as a build up to the annual COP conference usually held in November / December each year. The union once again supported and encouraged branches to mark Green UNISON Week, using it to celebrate, discuss and share how the union is working to green public services. From Friday 15 to Friday 22 September inclusive, branches



were asked to consider organising a week of activities to call for urgent action to tackle climate change.

There were also two national webinars:

- 1 Sustainable Healthcare – aimed at explaining the links to, and the impact of, climate change on healthcare, the changes needed and invigorating healthcare users (all of us) as well as healthcare workers, to get involved.
- 2 How to have meaningful Climate Conversations – an introduction to the UNISON Larger Us project (see above for more detail).
- 3 There were also a number of related social media engagement activities.

COP28: Tony Wright, Chair of UNISON's Policy Development and Campaign Committee, attended the first week of the 28th Annual International Conference of Parties (COP28) in Dubai. Representing UNISON as one of only 2 UK trade union representatives taking part in the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) observer delegation.

Trade unionist presence in various working groups and consultations allows us to contribute our expertise and ensure that labour issues are given due consideration, and the recognition of the role of trade unions in addressing climate change is a positive step towards a more inclusive and effective response. Trade unions from different countries and sectors came together to share experiences and strategies. Solidarity among unions and their federations from across the globe has grown. This has led to fruitful collaborations and the exchange of best practices. This unity has amplified our voice and enhanced our ability to influence climate policies and actions.

UNISON welcomed the inclusion of references to labour rights and social protection in the Just Transition Work Programme, the formation of a Loss and Damage Fund and was heartened by the recognition of the continuing work undertaken by trade unions around the world to tackle climate change. However, the absence of any reference to workers and their unions in the key COP28 “Global Stocktake” is a significant omission. Overall, some progress has been made at this COP, however, much more needs to be done if the joint targets of not breaching the 1.5% temperature increase and a fair and just transition are to be met.

Finally, with a newly formed policy sub-group focusing specifically on climate change policy, UNISON remains fully committed to working towards a climate-resilient world that prioritises workers’ rights and the wellbeing of communities.

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## The Strikes Act

Introduced in January 2023, the Strikes Bill was rushed through Parliament and received Royal Assent in July 2023. It gives the Westminster Government sweeping powers to set down minimum service levels (MSLs) on strike days in selected services in England, Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland is excluded. These six key public services are health; fire and rescue; education; transport; decommissioning of nuclear installations and management of radioactive waste and spent fuel; and border security. There is no detail within the Act on the limit to these ‘service levels’ – the power to set this is given to the government, who may introduce legislation that imposes the restrictions without agreement with unions who represent the key workers affected. Based on these levels, the government intends to force some people who have democratically and legally voted for strike action to go into work on strike days. It raises serious concerns about forcing workers to attend work against their will.

In December 2023 regulations covering Ambulance Services, Passenger Railway Services and Border security services were laid and passed. New consultations aimed at setting minimum service levels in Hospital Services and Education services were announced. In February 2024 regulations covering Fire and Rescue were passed.

UNISON campaigned vigorously against the Act with our sister unions and the TUC. This included lobbying MPs and peers, submissions to parliamentary committees, including a detailed submission by UNISON to the Joint Committee on Human Rights about the impact of MSLs on the Ambulance Service and an emergency rally in Parliament in May.

UNISON was also able to work with the Scottish and Welsh Governments, mayors, employers and civil society groups to push back on both practical and human rights grounds. Our campaign saw crucial amendments to the Bill made in the House of Lords. While the Government used its majority to override the concerns expressed by the Lords, UNISON was able to win some small concessions on the new regulations covering Ambulance Services. This included the exclusion of Scotland and Wales from the new regulations

and the acknowledgement by the Government that existing voluntary derogations within the Ambulance service were preferred both by employers and trade unions to the imposition of MSLs.

In December the TUC called a Special Congress which brought together the trade union movement to explore a trade union wide campaign of opposition to the Act.

The Special Congress adopted a statement which outlined action points including commitments to:

- continue the wider legal challenge to these undemocratic laws – leaving no stone unturned internationally and in UK courts;
- hold Labour to their commitment to repeal this legislation within their first 100 days of office as a key part of promoting and fully implementing the wider New Deal for working people as a flagship policy in the forthcoming general election;
- call on all employers and public bodies with oversight to oppose this counterproductive legislation. Employers and public bodies from across the public sector and across the country have already signalled their opposition to the Strikes Act. All employers and public bodies must reject it;
- ensure that any employer tempted to deploy and impose work notices understands that the union movement will unite to resist them - in the workplace and in the courts;
- campaign to name and shame as anti-union and anti-worker all employers and public bodies who deploy work notices;
- coordinate communications and campaigning activity across the trade union movement.

UNISON's campaign against this pernicious legislation continues during 2024.

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## TUC March and Rally - protect the right to strike

At the end of January, the TUC held a national demonstration in Cheltenham to protect the right to strike. This coincided with the 40th anniversary of the Thatcher Government banning trade union membership at GCHQ, repealed many years later by the Labour Government. There was a good turnout of UNISON members and staff and English ambulance members led off the march as they are the first group of UNISON members to be covered by Minimum Service Levels (MSLs) regulations. Christina McAnea addressed the rally to assert the right to strike for

a pay rise as a fundamental human right and that striking staff were not responsible for the cuts to public services

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## Employment law campaigning – wins and losses

### Post EU exit changes

At short notice in late 2023 the Westminster Government rushed through obscure statutory instruments to weaken EU derived employment law. The NEC lobbied MPs and Lords against the changes.

The Employment Rights (Amendment, Revocation and Transitional Provision) Regulations 2023 will weaken workers' rights was the clear message. In particular:

- The ending of record keeping of daily working hours for working time regulations purposes.
- Reversing a UNISON backed win in the Supreme Court, *Brazel vs Harpur Trust*, and which UNISON members particularly in schools have been making successful claims for extra holiday pay (with back pay).
- The introduction of “rolled-up” holiday pay which disincentivises workers from taking paid annual leave.

**Gains from private members bills:** there have been a series of successful private members bills in the Westminster parliament in 2023 with implementation likely in 2024 or 2025. Many were explicitly backed by UNISON. These included:

**Carers' leave:** expected to apply starting 6 April 2024, employees will have the day-one right to one week of unpaid leave (which can be taken in one go or over a number of full or half days) in a 12-month period for the purposes of providing or arranging care for a dependent with a long-term care need.

**Flexible working:** the right to request flexible working will become a day one right (i.e. removing the 26-week service requirement) for requests made on or after 6 April 2024.

The following Bill was a UNISON success working with Dan Jarvis MP. UNISON members gave case studies and contacted MPs to back the Bill.

**Redundancy protection:** extended statutory protections for those on maternity, adoption or shared parental leave (SPL) in a redundancy situation will apply beginning 6 April 2024.

**Predictable contracts:** The Workers (Predictable Terms and Conditions) Act 2023 is expected to come into effect in September 2024. This legislation allows workers and agency workers the right to request (up to two times in a 12-month period) a predictable working pattern in certain circumstances. It is anticipated that there will be a minimum service requirement of 26 weeks, and applications can be rejected on statutory grounds.

**Harassment:** The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, which places a duty on employers to take reasonable steps to avoid discrimination in the workplace, and the power for tribunals to uplift compensation by 25% where an employer fails in this duty is expected to come into force in October 2024.

#### **Trade Union Act 2016: new DOCAS regulations**

As part of the passage of the Trade Union Bill in 2015 and 2016 UNISON fought long and hard to prevent the abolition of DOCAS (deduction of contributions at source) in the public sector in Great Britain. The Act eventually allowed DOCAS to continue if a fee was paid to the employer to cover the costs.

The Wales government got favourable legal advice and disapplied the public sector parts of the Act (which included facility time monitoring and capping, DOCAS fees and the extra Important Public Services industrial action ballot threshold). The Scottish Parliament unfortunately got formal legal advice that they could not disapply the public sector parts of the Act.

The DOCAS provisions do not include voluntary sector and private company providers of public services but do include wider public services such as Universities. UNISON has been lobbying to delay these provisions being implemented since 2016. However, in late 2023 the Government formally introduced the regulations from May 2024 in England and Scotland only.

UNISON Centre staff and Regions have been working hard to put in place agreements with employers over many years to protect members' rights to pay union subscriptions how they choose and protect the union's income.

#### **Human Rights**

Threat to the Human Rights Act (HRA): last year the Tory government tried to force through a Bill that would scrap

the Human Rights Act and replace with a weaker Bill of Rights. The proposals would have put further obstacles between potentially vulnerable individuals and their ability to enforce their legal rights specially for people already facing barriers in accessing justice. Worse, it framed basic rights as rewards for good behaviour by introducing a possibility that certain groups could be stripped of their ability to rely on their Convention rights which would essentially be deciding that certain groups are not 'human' enough for human rights. Despite huge criticism, including from its own MP's, Dominic Raab MP was determined to push this Bill through parliament at all costs. UNISON members look after many people from disadvantaged groups in our society. Therefore, we know, first-hand that the UK's Human Rights Act safety-net is a crucial source of legal protection for people across the country. It provides a means for those who have been mistreated or failed by the system to challenge their treatment and hold authorities to account. It provides essential protection for all of us when we need it most.

Our devolved nations are embracing the full opportunities for positive social change that a human rights-based approach can bring to the provision of public services. Where the current Westminster Government appears to be entirely uncomfortable with the current reach of the HRA, UNISON is working alongside our devolved governments to embed it. Not to mention the importance of the HRA as part of the ongoing processes to meet the commitment to create a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, a major unimplemented commitment within the Good Friday Agreement.

We are pleased to report that this immediate threat to the HRA died when Dominic Raab MP left government.

UNISON believes the HRA is working and there is no evidence-based case for change. Our current evidence-based policy position is to retain, protect and expand the current Human Rights Act in full.

**Linking Climate Change to Human Rights:** work is starting within our Human Rights coalition partners group in the UK on linking the devastating impacts of climate change to basic Human Rights (to food, work and a habitable environment amongst others). Wales and Scotland are making headway in embedding human rights, with explicit reference to the environment, into their own legislations. Cases are landing in Europe (Portugal), some USA states (Montana) and other countries globally, holding governments to account for breach of human rights directly

linked to failure to protect against the impact of climate change. This is likely to be an expanding area of interest for climate change policy globally and nationally.

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## Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data use in the Public Services

**AI** – Technology can make work better, by making it fairer, safer, faster, less monotonous, and more productive. It can create new jobs and enhance the skills of workers, and has the potential to transform the delivery of public services for the better.

However, there are also potential risks to the introduction of new technologies in the workplace. Tools which manage staff and service delivery (“algorithmic management”) can infringe worker privacy with new forms of monitoring and surveillance, intensify work, de-skill work and, when used to make decisions, lead to unfair treatment of workers and service users. Some AI technologies – including those used in recruitment processes - have been found to be biased against certain groups of people, and to therefore amplify patterns of discrimination. A recent example of this is a new report that has highlighted how popular artificial intelligence tools, such as ChatGPT, exhibit racial biases around language-use leading to harsher decisions in algorithmic decision-making in America.

AI systems at work, by their nature, involve the processing of worker data, and there are therefore questions around member data protection. UNISON remains concerned about the lack of worker voice and transparency in introducing new technology used to make decisions that directly affect them.

This year UNISON has participated in the TUC’s AI taskforce, calling for new legislation to safeguard workers’ rights and ensure AI benefits everyone. This has involved feeding into the taskforce’s AI and Employment Bill and engaging with other TUC campaigning work on AI issues.

For members, branches and regions, UNISON has produced a bargaining guide on new technologies and AI in the workplace.

**Data Use** – AI often relies on access to large, and highly sensitive, data sets which, appropriately regulated, can reap huge rewards for the public good. However, such large data-sets (such as the NHS federated data platform), are

also considered to be highly valuable public assets. UNISON is clear that all public sector assets, including data assets, must be kept within the public sector and used exclusively for the good of the public sector and not used as bargaining chips in private finance initiatives.

This year UNISON has also raised concerns about the Westminster government’s proposed dilution of citizen rights under the current data protection legislation.

In the coming year, UNISON is looking to make technology and AI a bigger area of focus within the union. As well as developing union policy and producing briefings and other materials, this will involve conducting mapping exercises to scope the extent of AI introduction in UNISON member branches and build a body of evidence on the use of technology in workplaces.

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## International

The International Committee’s work programme set out the following priorities for our international work: Palestine, Colombia and Brazil, Turkey and Business and Human Rights. We remain affiliated to and active in Public Services International (PSI) and the European federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU). UNISON’s International Development Fund (UIDF) is supporting organising projects with both PSI and EPSU. We have also met with many of our close partner unions across the globe including from the United States, Sweden, Norway, France, Germany, Australia and South Korea.

Our work on Palestine since 7 October has focused on the call for a ceasefire, access to humanitarian assistance and for the immediate and safe release of hostages held by Hamas. We have published several statements condemning the heinous attack by Hamas and the devastating Israeli offensive on Gaza and supported multiple peaceful demonstrations in support of a ceasefire. Branches have responded generously to the appeal to support the work of Medical Aid for Palestinians and the Red Cross in Gaza and Israel. We have published guidance with Hope not Hate in response to unprecedented increase in antisemitism and Islamophobia.

The UIDF is supporting two new projects with Kav LaOved and MAAN to organise Palestinian workers in the illegal settlements and improve their rights, in response to the further deterioration of workers’ rights in the occupied West Bank.

We have worked to oppose the Government’s Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill which would limit ethical procurement and investment decisions by public bodies, where they relate to the conduct or policy of a foreign government.

Trade unions in Turkey continue to be targeted for defending human and workers’ rights. UNISON’s general secretary and other observers have attended the ongoing trial of members of the health workers union SES, who are accused of terrorism offences for their trade union work. We have hosted leading trade unionists from Turkey in order to highlight the denial of rights to activists and parliamentarians. In April we started a new UIDF project to support the union federation KESK to campaign for peace and quality public services.

We have continued to support Justice for Colombia. Despite the election of the country’s first progressive government, attacks on human rights defenders, including trade unionists, continue as the government seeks to pursue its policy of ‘Total Peace’. Colombia’s trade unions continue to support the new government and are working hard to seek major changes to the country’s labour laws. We welcomed the re-election of President in Lula in Brazil and the defeat of the far-right on Bolsonaro. We continue to monitor events in Brazil closely, but the country is no longer a priority for us.

Our work on campaigning for a Business, Human Rights and Environment Act, has progressed well. A House of Lords Private Members’ Bill modelled on our coalition partner’s draft Act includes the public sector as well as the private sector in its scope, is set for a second reading. Further, the Labour Party’s 2023 National Policy Forum report commits: “In line with existing international standards, a Labour government will assess the best way to prevent environmental harms, modern slavery and human and labour rights abuses in both private and public sector supply chains including effective due diligence rules”.

UNISON continues to work closely with Electronics Watch, a worker-driven monitoring organisation with 1,500 public sector affiliates across Europe and Australia. Its new five-year strategy includes a goal contributing towards more workers’ being organised into trade unions. Our UIDF public sector supply chain electronics organising project, focused on Malaysia, has begun. UNISON also contributed to Electronics Watch’s ‘Worker-driven Remedy Principles’ and work is underway to develop guidance and tools for workers and their unions to test the principles.

The UIDF is also supporting projects with unions in Zimbabwe, Costa Rica as well as our on-going work with the Building Workers’ International in Qatar. We are also working closely with the exiled leadership of the Hong Kong trade union movement, many of whom are now in the UK. We remain affiliated to a range of solidarity organisations working on Cuba, Iran, Western Sahara and other countries.

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## Windrush, Migrant workers and refugees

### Migrant workers

UNISON’s campaigning work on immigration and our advocacy for the rights of migrant workers has intensified due to rising overseas recruitment in the Health and Social care sector and Government rhetoric and actions. UNISON has worked to ensure that our branches and regions are supported in responding to the issues faced by our members as well as taking the lead nationally on campaigning and advocacy.

### Exploitation of migrant workers in the social care sector

The stark reality for migrant workers in the UK is that they are under-protected by our employment rights framework and victimised by our immigration rules.

Migrant social care workers are particularly vulnerable to this kind of ill-treatment because of the nature of the sector and its interaction with the ‘hostile environment’. Acute underfunding, a refusal to address workers’ pay and the absence of meaningful reform has left the sector in crisis. Care workers are overworked, underpaid, and struggling to plug the gaps in a sector desperately short of staff. The Government has focused on overseas recruitment but has done little to dismantle the harsh immigration rules which constitute the ‘hostile environment’. This has seen migrant care workers trapped between exploitative employers and an immigration framework which sees migrant people as the problem.

Over the past year UNISON has worked to ensure that branches were supported in their work to challenge this exploitation with regional and national resources and support. This crucial work has also led to case studies that have driven media attention and political pressure to tackle the kind of abuses faced by our members.

This includes UNISON’s recent report ‘Expendable Labour’ available on the UNISON website. The report found workers exploited by care employers and left exposed by a government that should be protecting them. Migrant care workers are frequently trapped in inadequate housing, paid rock-bottom wages for excessive hours, and locked into unfair contracts. Many have paid colossal fees to take jobs in the UK. Some say they are unable to leave a location even when they are not on shift or are told to pay back huge sums to the company when they raise concerns about their working conditions or service quality. Sometimes this is backed with threats of deportation.

Alongside our campaign for a National Care Service and more effective enforcement activity to crack down on labour market abuses, UNISON is also calling for a dismantling of the Hostile Environment and an immigration policy which treats migrant people with respect and decency.

### Asylum seekers and refugees

Through last year’s ‘Illegal Migration’ Act and its ‘Rwanda scheme’, the Government has sought to reduce the right to seek asylum in the UK to a technicality. Virtually all asylum seekers will be deemed ‘illegal’ and denied sanctuary in the UK no matter how compelling their case is. UNISON campaigned strongly against the ‘Illegal Migration’ Act arguing that it:

- violates our international humanitarian obligations and damages the UK’s reputation on human rights;
- reduces the ability to seek asylum to a mere technicality, amounting to a virtual ban on asylum in the UK;
- leaves asylum seekers in a terrible legal limbo of being indefinitely detained in the UK with no hope of being given secure refugee status;
- renders asylum seekers even more vulnerable to unscrupulous people smugglers, exploitation and modern slavery;
- gives ministers unprecedented powers and strips vital legal protections away from a group of extremely vulnerable and unprotected people;
- creates a knowingly unworkable and ineffective response to a crisis created by the Government’s own policies;
- is being promoted using inflammatory rhetoric that gives succour to far-right groups who are targeting asylum seekers in violent attacks.

- We also drew parliamentarians’ attention to the serious concerns of our members working in health and social work about the lack of protection for children, especially child refugees, including the reintroduction of immigration detention of children and the powers given to the Secretary of State to deport unaccompanied child refugees.

### Justice for the Windrush Generation

Campaigning for justice for the Windrush generation continues to be a key priority for UNISON, given the failure by the Government to abide by its own commitments to those affected by the scandal. UNISON was extremely disappointed that the Home Secretary decided in January 2023 not to proceed with three key recommendations made by independent reviewer, Wendy Williams in her ‘Lessons learned’ Review. This is despite a previous Home Secretary giving an ‘unequivocal commitment’ to ensure all the recommendations were implemented.

The abandoned commitments included the appointment of a ‘migrants’ commissioner, to engage with migrant communities directly and facilitate their feedback into the Home Office, a review of the remit and role of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, and reconciliation events with Windrush families.

Recommendations nine and ten in particular, were identified by Wendy Williams as going to one of the three key elements of the Home Office’s response to the Windrush scandal: namely, that it “must open itself up to greater external scrutiny.” Ms Williams has described them as “vital to improve the accountability, effectiveness and legitimacy of the system.”

UNISON is currently working with other parties in a legal challenge for this decision and we have been given permission to go ahead in the High Court this spring. UNISON launched its litigation in June 2023, arguing that both the migrants’ commissioner and a strengthened watchdog would help to protect against a future ‘Windrush scandal’, allowing for greater protections for migrant workers and act as a break on yet more inhumane policies towards refugees.

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### Procurement, Anti-Privatisation and Insourcing

In 2023/24 UNISON continued to work on promoting

insourcing as a viable, effective, and better alternative when contracts come up for renewal. Additionally, work continued on seeking to ensure that services remain ‘in-house’ rather than being outsourced in the first place. This included the delivery of three online ‘anti-privatisation’ courses delivered for UNISON’s local government service group.

In 2023 UNISON focused work on establishing our insourcing campaign – [Bringing Services Home](#). This campaign supports activists and branches who want to develop strategies for services to be brought back in-house when contracts come up for renewal. This work started with the writing and publication of the UNISON guide [Bargaining for Insourcing](#) produced by the our Bargaining Support Unit. The guide takes activists through the process of researching, building an organising campaign and negotiating for the return of services to the public body and for staff to be transferred to direct employment with the public body.

The new [Bringing Services Home](#) webpage was and it contains a wide range of other campaign resources including: leaflets, editable leaflets, placards, posters, graphics and a short, animated video. In addition, UNISON produced two films profiling how two different branches ran very different but successful insourcing campaigns. The first film features [Barts NHS Trust branch in London](#), where most of the soft FM contract returned in-house including cleaners, porters, post-room and security. The second film features Chorley and South Ribble local government branch where the [South Ribble waste and refuse collection](#) was insourced. A feature on [insourcing in a higher education branch](#) was published in December 2023. The webpage also links through to the UNISON in local government podcast that features a case of insourcing leisure services.

UNISON’s Bringing Services Home resources include the development of an in-person or online training course. This was developed with our Learning and Organising Services team and is available for all regions to deliver. We have created a new online e-learning module which takes about twenty minutes to work through. This module is available to all activists on our [e-learning website](#) and can be completed wherever/whenever it is suitable for the learner.

From April 2023 until March 2024, EPSU and PSI have been coordinating a global project on insourcing and UNISON has been a key part of this project. The project, entitled Insourcing, remunicipalisation and quality public services (INQPS) has commissioned and developed an

online training programme on bringing services back into public ownership. The training is available on the PSI website.

UNISON has continued to work with the TUC to seek to influence the passage of the Procurement Bill, as well as the accompanying regulations and guidance necessary to enact the legislation, now that it has become law. Although the chances of securing meaningful concessions from a Conservative government have been non-existent, the exercise has enabled a productive dialogue with the Labour front bench and the identification of priorities around insourcing and the need for a two-tier code, which were subsequently included in the Labour Party’s National Policy Forum document. This will form the basis of the Party’s manifesto for government.

In June 2023 UNISON published the report “Securing the Public Interest Through Insourcing and better procurement” written by John Tizard and funded by the Campaign Fund. This report sets a framework for resetting the default on re/tendering public services to bring more services in-house. This was launched at a parliamentary meeting attended by Angela Rayner MP.

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## The Covid-19 Public Inquiry

**The Inquiry:** following the successful campaign from UNISON, the TUC and bereaved families’ groups to set up a public inquiry on the UK’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the last year saw that inquiry begin in earnest. Following last year’s work, where our inquiry team helped shape the terms of reference, UNISON has remained focused on three guiding principles when working on the UK Covid-19 Inquiry – to learn the lessons from the pandemic, hold those responsible to account, and crucially, make sure that our members voices are heard.

**Engagement so far:** after Baroness Hallett’s appointment as chair of the inquiry, it was made clear that the inquiry would be working on a modular basis, with each module focusing on a different aspect of the pandemic. At the time of writing public hearings on government preparedness and decision making had been completed. Preparatory work has begun on modules covering healthcare during the pandemic, vaccinations, procurement and social care.

To avoid duplication, ensure effective use of trade union resources and maximise influence, UNISON is working

with an inquiry team at the TUC. The TUC has successfully applied for core participant status on behalf of the entire trade union movement for the modules on preparedness, decision making, healthcare and social care. For the UK inquiry, our team is working with colleagues and members from across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in pursuit of the union's objectives. In addition to the UK inquiry, it is important to note that a separate one continues to run in Scotland. Our inquiry team is working closely with Scottish members, staff members and the STUC to make sure that our Scottish members voices are heard in that process as well.

Working with the TUC, our inquiry team has been instrumental in making sure that real experiences from UNISON members are forming part of the evidence being put in front of the inquiry, as well as helping shape questions that the TUC legal team are able to ask of witnesses, during the public hearings.

The most significant module for the union so far is module three, 'impact of Covid-19 pandemic on healthcare systems in the 4 nations of the UK'. For this module, UNISON's own Head of Health is the trade union witness when the public hearings take place later in 2024. Experiences from UNISON members have played a key role in our submission for this module, and UNISON will be seeking to highlight the important role that trade unions played during the pandemic, in addition to our three guiding principles.

At the time of writing, UNISON has just finished supporting the TUC in their application for core participant status for module six, care sector, that we know is a priority for members.

Our inquiry team still expects further modules over the next eighteen months on Education, Key Workers and the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on Black communities.

**New ways to collect evidence:** we know that reflecting on the pandemic can be difficult, but making sure our members' voices are heard really matters. Every experience and every story is unique, and we know the pandemic affected every single one of our members in a different way. Making sure we tell it how it really was will make a huge difference to the outcomes of the inquiry when it reports in a few years' time.

We are continuing to collect and preserve evidence, and a new tool will soon be launched on UNISON's website,

to allow all members to feed in what impact the pandemic had on them, but also find the latest news on UNISON's involvement with the inquiry.

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## Housing

UNISON continues to raise housing issues facing our members to policy-makers and call for solutions to improve the supply, affordability, stability and quality of housing.

Last year, we published a major report, "Through the Roof" after a successful bid to UNISON's Campaign Fund. The report commissioned from the Labour Research Department (LRD) is based on a comprehensive analysis of the housing crisis experienced by our members who responded, working across all public services in: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It revealed that housing problems, including rising housing costs, insecurity and poor-quality housing have been made worse by the cost-of-living crisis, with increasing numbers of our members struggling to pay high rents and mortgages and manage household bills.

The report made several recommendations, including calls for more investment in council and social rented homes; measures to improve affordability and quality standards across the housing system; effective regulation in the private rented sector to make renting more stable and affordable; and reform of the welfare system to help people with their housing costs. UNISON disseminated the report to politicians, policy-makers, councilors and housing campaigners. UNISON officers also met with politicians and housing stakeholders to discuss the issues and recommendations in the report, which are supported by housing campaigners and politicians across the political spectrum. The report is being used to influence the government and the main political parties' housing policies ahead of the General Election.

In November 2023, UNISON hosted a virtual Roundtable discussion with over thirty councilors from a variety of political parties on the impact of rising living and housing costs on workers and citizens. Councilors described high levels of housing need in their local areas, and the lack of Government investment to meet this and tackle homelessness. They shared UNISON's vision that council housing should be at the heart of any government strategy to tackle the housing crisis, and called for reforms, including significant funding to enable councils to build more low-cost



homes to meet housing need; land and planning reform to boost social house-building; and the abolition of the Right to Buy in England. A report of the Roundtable meeting outlining the significant agreement on strategies to help alleviate the housing crisis is also being used to lobby politicians.

UNISON responded to national and government consultations on housing. This includes evidence submitted to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Council Housing's Inquiry into the demand for council homes in England. UNISON's evidence highlighted the crucial role councils play in providing homes, and the challenges they face; and made a strong case for council housing and planning departments to be adequately supported with grant funding, resources, greater powers and flexibilities to provide and maintain homes.

Over the past year, UNISON has published briefings on housing and disseminated this to policy-makers. This includes parliamentary briefings on the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, in which we called for provisions to prioritise the development of more low-cost council and social housing to meet growing demand; and on the Social Housing Regulation Bill, in which we supported measures to drive up quality and safety standards in social housing in response to the Grenfell fire tragedy and called for additional resources to enable housing providers to deliver this.

After years of campaigning for improvements in private renting, the Government finally introduced the Renter's (Reform) Bill in England last year. This seeks to provide better standards and improved security for private renters, which we welcomed. However, there are loopholes in the bill which will make it easier for landlords to evict tenants, if they wish to move back into their property or sell it. In Scotland where similar policies were introduced, there is growing evidence showing that landlords are using this as a back door to evict renters. UNISON disseminated a briefing to politicians and met with them to discuss our concerns about the Bill. We also circulated a briefing to the Bill's Committee ahead of the Second Reading of the Bill in October last year outlining our concerns and the amendments we want to see around improving renters' rights and protections from evictions; longer notice periods for renters; and extending the Decent Homes standard to the private rented sector to drive up standards. Our campaigning has resulted in important amendments to the Bill, which includes measures to introduce the Decent Homes Standard and banning discrimination against children and benefit claimants in accessing private rented housing. UNISON

continues to campaign for progressive housing reforms – alongside campaign partners, including Generation Rent – for the benefit of our members and citizens across the housing system.

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## Equality

UNISON's long-standing equality campaigns continue to be at the heart of the union's fight for fair treatment in the workplace and for social justice as follows:

- measures to tackle pay inequality, including ending the discriminatory lower minimum wage rates for young workers, and mandatory publication of pay gap data, including the disability and ethnicity pay gaps;
- a day one right to flexible working;
- the expansion of accessible, affordable, high quality and publicly provided childcare and improved carer's leave;
- seeking employer sign-ups and lobbying government and the Labour party on the nine demands in the groundbreaking Disability Employment Charter
- a new two-week deadline for responses to reasonable adjustment requests and a stronger right to disability leave;
- embedding legislative gains on tackling sexual harassment and domestic abuse;
- tackling violence against women and girls;
- improvements to rights/ benefits for pregnant workers/new mothers;
- A complete ban on conversion therapy and reform of the Gender Recognition Act;
- challenging the myths, prejudice and disinformation around trans rights;
- pensions equality – retaining the state pension age, the earnings link and triple lock and improving employer rates for workplace pensions, particularly for the low-paid;
- better enforcement of the Equality Act and improved resourcing of the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

As part of delivering UNISON's Organising to Win Strategy, the Equality and Strategic Organising Units are developing a tool which will enable the measurement of success in linking organising aims and equality objectives. This will assist in reinforcing that equality is very much UNISON business.

## Women Members

Women make up the majority of UNISON membership. They are more likely than men to be in low paid jobs and they have been hit hardest by upwardly spiraling prices because it is women who tend to have the main responsibility for caring for their families and for household budgets.

During the last year, we have campaigned on the cost-of-living issues affecting pregnant workers and new mothers. The failure to increase maternity pay is driving some pregnant workers and new mothers into acute financial hardship. UNISON is funding a research project by Maternity Action which is helping to develop the evidence base about the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on pregnant workers and new parents. This research is helping the union to build on our campaigns for improved investment in maternity pay, better maternity and parental rights.

In November 2023 Maternity Action published the report *A Perfect Storm* documenting the impact of the cost of living on pregnant women and new mothers. The report contains troubling statistics about the reality of being a new mother in Britain. Ahead of a General Election we are calling for a commitment from an incoming government to raise maternity payments, expand eligibility, and support women to access entitlements and remain in work.

Following publication UNISON has worked with Maternity Action to deliver webinars raising awareness of the issues detailed in the report and successfully re-published the report to generate media interest in the run up to the 2024 National Women's Conference.

UNISON also worked successfully with Dan Jarvis MP on a new law, the Protection from Redundancy (Pregnancy and Family Leave) Act 2023, which is effective from April 2024. We also worked with the charity Bliss to support another new law, the Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Act 2023, which provides extra leave and pay for parents whose babies are born prematurely. However, this Act will not be implemented until April 2025.

The cost of living has also impacted on working parents. Nursery costs have risen four times faster than wages, so many public service workers are having to take second or third jobs to pay for childcare. Women, especially, are leaving work altogether because they cannot afford nursery fees. In March 2024, the TUC Women's Conference

adopted UNISON's motion on Childcare which is now part of a composite motion to Congress.

UNISON is a founder member of the Early Education and Childcare Coalition which includes the TUC, other trade unions, charities, research organisations and academics to campaign for reform of the childcare sector including better pay and conditions for the early years workforce. Our lobbying on rights to flexible working sits alongside our campaigns for improvements in maternity rights and benefits, parental leave and for universal childcare. We have shone a light on the difficulties women experience in getting employers to respond positively to requests to work flexibly including a survey published to coincide with national women's conference 2024, which attracted a massive 44,000 responses.

Unless the support and caring jobs that women do are properly valued, the gender pay gap will remain stubbornly wide. Pay inequity for working women extends into retirement. Over two thirds of pensioners living in poverty are women. UNISON continues to campaign for a new legal requirement for employers to report on their action plans to reduce gender pay gaps. UNISON also continues to call for maintenance of the triple lock on pensions and supports the WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) campaign – pension justice for thousands of women born in the 1950's whose retirement age was raised by the government with inadequate notice to make alternative plans.

The gender pay gap is highest for women who are aged over 50. Research shows that the childcare penalty and menopause are key factors. Throughout the year UNISON has continued to negotiate nationally and locally for workplace menopause policies so members can receive practical support from their employer.

At a minimum, sexual harassment is experienced by 40% of women in the workforce, over the course of their career. UNISON worked with the TUC in a coalition of trade unions, charities, and research organisations to support Wera Hobhouse's Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Private Member's Bill which received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023. Although the new Act will not come into force until October 2024, UK employers can take steps now to ensure they are prepared to comply with a new preventative duty. The hope is that rather than being seen as isolated incidents perpetrated by a few individuals, sexual harassment will be seen as a pervasive cultural problem which can be prevented by proactive interventions.

UNISON's National Women's Committee has worked with the International Committee to defend abortion rights in the UK and internationally and lobbied successfully along with BPAS and other organisations on an amendment to the Public Order Bill (now the Public Order Act 2023) to introduce buffer zones around abortion clinics. Campaigning is now concentrating on an end to the criminalisation of abortion and UNISON is supporting Diana Johnson MP's amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill, seeking to end the prosecution of women who terminate their own pregnancy.

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## Black Members

UNISON's Black members work mainly in health and local government services, with significant numbers working in social care and schools. Many deliver frontline services, and many are low paid. The pandemic both exposed and exacerbated disadvantage for Black workers in the workplace, and wider society. Institutional racism made this disadvantage worse. The nature of the debate around immigration and the hostile environment with growing right-wing rhetoric continues to underline the importance of UNISON's priority of challenging racism and discrimination in every form. UNISON's National Black Members Committee (NBMC) works hard to ensure race equality is at the heart of UNISON's campaigns.

UNISON agreed that 2023 should be UNISON's Year of Black Workers (YOBW). The YOBW Campaign provided a focus for our work to advance race equality and end discrimination in the workplace during 2023 and continues to do so. In 2024, the priority is to ensure the achievements and successes of the campaign mean continuing practical and sustainable change.

The successes of the YOBW campaign are described elsewhere in this report.

Campaigning for race equality in wider society is no less important than our work to secure positive change in the workplace. Our participation in the Notting Hill Carnival and Black History Month celebrations facilitated by UNISON's Campaign Fund reinforce the importance of race equality for the union. Engagement with civil society in this way means UNISON is able to influence for the benefit of all Black people. Celebrating achievements raises awareness and helps the quest for race equality. Our external facing campaigns are also important in attracting recruitment

and retaining Black members in the union. Recruiting Black workers is key to ensuring that Black members remain visible and vocal within union structures. An organised Black membership means we can continue to support members and lead on achieving race equality and challenging racism in the workplace.

We mobilised ahead of the UN anti-racism day of action on 18 March 2024 in London, Cardiff, and Glasgow, to ensure a big UNISON turn-out. We also had a strong UNISON presence at the Windrush vigil in April 2023, sponsored an award ceremony with Show Racism the Red Card in April 2023, acknowledged and celebrated South Asian Heritage Month in July 2023, and marked the Abolition of Slavery in August 2023. UNISON played a prominent role in the UN Anti-Racism Day events in London and Glasgow on 16 March and Wales on 17 March 2024.

Ensuring that Black members are visible and vocal within union structures is important. Ensuring Black voices are heard means we can continue to organise and support Black members and lead on achieving race equality and challenging racism in the workplace and representing members in discrimination cases.

The National Delegate Conference in June 2022 agreed unanimously that the NEC 'pay full attention to the rule book requirement to fair representation'. The National Black Members Committee are pleased that Black representation in the UNISON's National Executive Council has increased with more representation in regional and service group seats in addition to the 4 NEC Black Seats already in existence and that the NEC staffing committee now has Black representation.

Concern about the increasing number of complaints about how race cases are handled in UNISON led to the NBMC seeking and getting agreement for a formal inquiry which started during 2023. This includes examining the process of legal representation. The inquiry heard evidence from Black members who experienced racism at branch and regional level in early 2024. It is sponsored by the General Secretary and has been endorsed by the President and NBMC.

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## Disabled Members

In the last year we have continued to consolidate the legacy of our 2022 Year of Disabled Workers campaign.

We are continuing to encourage branches to work on our three themes, negotiating disability policies, electing and training disability reps, and backing the ground-breaking Disability Employment Charter campaign. With an estimated 200,000 disabled members in UNISON, it's every branch's responsibility to organise, bargain and campaign on disability equality.

From Energy and WET to local government and from Community to Health, we saw new Reasonable Adjustment Passports and Disability Leave policies achieved in 2023/24 thanks to the hard work of branch negotiators.

We saw more branches elect and train branch disabled members officers and send them on our now regular online disability officers training. We have now built on this to pilot a stage 2 training course for those who have already undertaken the disability officers training. This second stage will focus on organising.

We have also delivered a number of online training sessions explaining how to apply to Access to Work. These sessions are complemented by our comprehensive Members Guide to Access to Work which can be ordered from the online catalogue.

As a founding member, and the only trade union involved from the start, we helped achieve the milestone of over 160 employers signed up to the Disability Employment Charter. We were pleased to receive great support from Labour's front bench team, with the shadow minister for disabled people, Vicky Foxcroft speaking at our parliamentary event on the charter. We worked with the Labour Link to successfully lobby the Labour Party to include important commitments on disability pay gap monitoring and a simpler and quicker process for reasonable adjustments in their agreed policy programme running into the expected election.

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## LGBT+ Members

The LGBT+ national committee successfully launched an overarching campaign plan for trans equality in July 2022. There was a great turn-out and this enthusiasm has grown as the campaign further developed in 2023. This support for the campaign within UNISON is important given increasing attacks on and hostility towards LGBT+ people in wider society.

New trans equality bargaining, campaigning, and organising resources for branches can be found on the LGBT+ website. Over 4000 UNISON members have now undertaken our trans ally training, which is run nationally, regionally and to branches. The training has been so successful, it has been difficult to keep up with the demand. As a result, over 70 trans, non-binary and gender diverse members have trained to deliver the training in their regions. There has also been a rise in trans and non-binary activism because of this campaign, and the national trans, non-binary and gender diverse caucus has grown from 120 members to over 520 members. Trans equality campaigning was front and centre of many of the local Prides during 2023 where UNISON had a presence – we are united as a union that trans equality is UNISON business. In addition to this work, we have had over 40 employers adopt our trans equality model policy. The LGBT+ national committee has also focused on encouraging young LGBT+ members to participate in their SOG through a national network. This network is continually growing and as of March, has grown to over 300 members. As a result, we now have many young LGBT+ members that have stepped up and become active in their regional SOG with a few setting up a new branch LGBT+ group. The committee is currently rolling out a mentoring programme for young LGBT+ members to encourage them to be more involved and active in the SOG. We are delighted that we now have three young members sitting on the national LGBT+ committee as a result of this work.

Throughout 2023, we've met with Labour Party MPs to lobby for a full ban on all forms of conversion therapy and non-medicalised process for obtaining a gender recognition certificate. We will continue to advocate on these issues throughout this election year.

The LGBT+ national committee has continued with its focus on international work this year. At the ILGA Europe conference in October, Penny Smith was re-elected onto the board and has since been elected to be co-secretary for 2024. We have also continued to work with Public Services International and the LGBT+ project with the Global Unions, working with our sibling unions in Europe and Latin America to ensure PSI is a leader when it comes to advocating for LGBT+ workers internationally.

The national LGBT+ committee is now rolling out the Year of LGBT+ workers campaign, which is covered in a separate section of this report.

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## Young Members

At NDC in June last year, the age limit for UNISON's Young Members was lifted to age 30 following a dynamic campaign led by young members – roughly doubling the numbers of young members in UNISON. Following this rule change, the number of young members actively engaging with UNISON has already increased significantly. We are promoting the 'Getting Active in UNISON' report on organising young workers and developing an organising guide for young members, aimed at maximising the impact of the rule change.

A key campaign for UNISON's young members is mental health. We carried out a survey on mental health in 2022 which revealed the huge impact of the pandemic on young members' mental health: 80% of UNISON's young members told us they had experienced a mental health problem in the previous year. This survey provided the springboard for young members to campaign for UNISON to support the Right to Disconnect (the right not to have to answer phone calls or emails outside of working time) and a motion from young members on this was supported at National Delegate Conference in 2022. Subsequently, the Campaign Committee provided funding for a new campaign about the mental health of young workers which continues to be important in the run up to a General Election.

We continue to work across Self-Organised Groups and Service Groups to build organisation and engagement with younger workers. A new Black young members' network was launched early in 2024 following on the back of the very successful and growing LGBT+ young members network set up earlier in 2022. Networks provide young members a space to meet, network and support each other.

We continue to update young members with our email newsletter, which goes out quarterly to over 90,000 young members with updates on campaigning, surveys, education and opportunities to get more involved and active.

### Retired Members

Continuing rapid rises in the cost of living mean that last year was very difficult for many retired members. UNISON's National Retired Members Committee (NRMC) campaigned nationally on cost-of-living issues for pensioners including energy costs, alongside employed members in UNISON and with other pensioners' organisations. Campaigning for a decent pension income and against any further increase in state pension age also remain important national campaigns for NRMC.

Retired members are proud of their contribution to the national campaign to save rail ticket offices from closure. Trains are an essential public service for many pensioners who rely on ticket office staff for help navigating complicated fare systems, particularly if they can't access smart phones or computers. In 2023 UNISON's retired members groups were quick to get involved in local campaigns to save rail ticket offices from closure, joining disability campaigners and women's groups, and working with the National Pensioner's Convention (NPC) to highlight the impact of closure on pensioners. Train companies were told to withdraw the plans for closure by the Government in October 2023.

Retired members threw their weight behind UNISON's campaign for a National Care Service. Other important national campaigns supported by retired members during 2023 were digital exclusion, working with Age UK and for the establishment of an independent Commissioner for Older People, working with the NPC. In addition to Age UK and NOC, NRMC works with the Scottish Pensioners Forum, TUC and STUC pensioners' committees.

The Chair of NRMC continued in role as President of NPC. This role has a two-year term of office ending in March 2024. UNISON is well represented by retired member activists on various committees and working parties of NPC where we make our voices heard and work together on shared campaigning issues.

The National Committee continues to work to improve communications with retired members. An electronic newsletter for UNISON retired members has replaced the Interactive Newsletter discontinued in 2011.

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## Health and Safety Campaigning

UNISON members from across our union continue to face major health and safety challenges within public services. Our health and safety reps have tackled critical health and safety issues through a multitude of campaigning, organising and bargaining approaches. Over the last year, UNISON has placed a spotlight on some of the biggest health and safety issues. UNISON remains steadfast in its determination to create a world of work free from violence and harassment. One of the greatest risks to our members' health and safety is violence at work. This year the decision was taken to revitalise UNISON's End Violence at Work Charter, making it accessible to all members across our union.

The Charter was launched at the 2023 National Delegate Conference alongside a fringe event hosted by the health and safety unit. We heard from a variety of speakers including powerful testimonials from our members and their experiences. As a part of a package of activities, the decision was taken to make the theme of the health and safety seminar: 'Tackling Violence in Public Services. In addition, following the approval of a campaign fund bid, the health and safety unit has begun commissioning research into violence at work.

UNISON continues to play a central role in the submission of evidence and participation in the UK Covid-19 Inquiry. UNISON is part of the TUC working group for the inquiry, continuing to work towards attaining greater support and recognition for our members, who have made enormous sacrifices, putting their lives on the line during the pandemic.

UNISON's health group and health and safety unit, surveyed all UK-based UNISON NHS health and safety representatives to seek their views on COVID-19 preparedness in workplaces. The results revealed that over two-thirds of health and safety representatives felt their workplaces were not ready for a fresh outbreak of COVID-19, and not enough is being done to improve workplace ventilation. Tackling the legacy of the Covid pandemic includes UNISON supporting the Independent Sage COVID-19 safety pledge, which asks employers to commit to the best public health advice concerning Covid and other communicable diseases. On 28 April 2023, International Workers' Memorial Day, we remembered those who have died because of a workplace accident, ill health, or disease as a result of work. UNISON held a hybrid remembrance event on the day and relaunched our national health and safety awards to celebrate our UNISON members who continue to fight for the living.

The unit has developed extensive guidance and contributed expert advice to the TUC webinar on 'Understanding the Risk: RAAC in the Workplace'. We have engaged with the Department for Education and the Department for Health and Social Care on the ongoing issue of crumbling public buildings. UNISON has worked in collaboration with Mesothelioma UK and partners, to commission a cost-benefit analysis of removing asbestos from UK public buildings.

The psychological, economic and social influences on workers (psychosocial factors), impact both physical and mental health. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

statistics showed that 1.8 million workers reported they were suffering from work-related ill health in 2022/23, with approximately half of the cases down to stress, depression or anxiety.

UNISON continues to prioritise its organising and campaigning on Stress at work, previously through the 'Be on the Safe Side Campaign' and now through the anticipated launch of UNISON's National Stress Charter. We continue to support members via the stress claim protocol, including lobbying for the inclusion of suicide in what must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

UNISON's health and safety unit has delivered numerous workshops and seminars across our regions and service groups. Moreover, we worked closely on joint work with service and equality groups, supporting activity on several health and safety issues including Building safety, Long Covid, occupational health and disability, work-related stress, and violence at work.

The health and safety unit continues to deepen its existing partnership with the TUC, and our cooperation with other trade unions and stakeholders has allowed us to develop strong collective positions, in matters such as asbestos and other building safety issues in public services. This year the health and safety unit has initiated regular meetings with the Health and Safety Executive on a variety of issues that concern our members. In addition, the health and safety unit supported the development of resources, briefings and policy papers to ensure our members' voices are heard loud and clear within the political and policy sphere.

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## **Pensions campaigning**

Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) (England and Wales): UNISON is continuing to lobby the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to bring in the long-awaited Regulations for New Fair Deal. We do not have a date of introduction at the time of writing. Regulations to equalise widowers' pensions are expected after UNISON continues to lobby the Department and the Minister. There is concern that members in Communities, Housing, and other non-local government employers, who participate in the LGPS are being removed from the LGPS often by changing contracts using the threat of Fire and Re-hire. The Pension Unit has obtained verbal Counsel's opinion that while informative is able to offer little prospect of a legal challenge. We are continuing to seek further views and opinions.

Following the latest valuation, the funding levels of the LGPS have improved and there are increasing moves by Local Authorities to reduce employer contributions. We are monitoring this. The Government consulted in the Autumn on wide-ranging proposals to seek to guide LGPS funds more actively in their investment activities. Although most consultees rejected most proposals, the Government intends to press ahead with new guidance. We will advise reps and branches on this when this guidance is issued. This is clear interference and overreach by the Government in matters that Parliament has reserved to local decision-making.

**UNISON Pensions Seminar:** Over 100 members attended this event on 14 March 2024. The agenda covered a general update, gender equality in pensions, and investing pension funds for local impact. We will be looking for more opportunities for events, probably virtual, later in the year.

**NHS Pension Scheme consultation on employee contributions:** As reported last time UNISON responded to this consultation, opposing regressive changes to the contribution structure in the NHS pension scheme. Colleagues in Northern Ireland are responding to a similar consultation.

**NHS Pension Scheme:** McCloud remedy: UNISON members have been in touch with the Pensions Unit concerning letters received from NHSBSA about the implementation of the McCloud remedy. The NHSBSA has written to affected members about (i) their choice to now revoke their 'Choice2' decision made in 2015 to move benefits from the 1995 to the 2008 section, and (ii) successful and unsuccessful ill health retirement applications made during the remedy period of 2015–2022. The Unit is confident that members have nothing to lose by co-operating with a reassessment in relation to the latter. In relation to the former, the Unit is seeking clarifications from NHS Pensions prior to issuing website and/or email guidance.

**Higher Education pensions:** A guide was published and launched at the Higher Education branch seminar in November 2023. The guide describes how UNISON can organise and campaign to defend and improve pensions in HE. It draws on UNISON's five phases organising methodology and case studies from pre-92 and post-92 HE institutions where branches have been faced with employer offensives against members' pensions.

## Devolved nation influencing and campaigning

### Northern Ireland

February 2024 saw the return of devolved Government in Northern Ireland. The restoration of devolved Government provides an opportunity for early action to be taken to address ongoing pay disputes involving UNISON members and to progress longstanding UNISON campaigning priorities on major issues.

**Recruitment and organising:** During 2023 UNISON Northern Ireland (NI) further consolidated its position as the largest trade union in Northern Ireland, achieving record recruitment of 10,737 new joiners and a full membership figure of 50,903 members. This is year on year growth of 10.4% and 25% over the past five years.

Core to this progress has been the effective use of campaigns, pay ballots and industrial action to engage with thousands of members and potential members in face-to-face meetings across workplaces; as well as the priority afforded to the strategic organising model championed by the Organising to Win (OtW) strategy and associated campaigns. The OtW 'One UNISON' priority devolved nation social care campaign has, in Northern Ireland, delivered high levels of recruitment, new activists and real improvements in the terms and conditions of some of the most vulnerable and poorly treated members in private sector companies providing public services.

The UNISON NI organising, recruitment and retention strategy continues to be focused on ensuring that effective branch and regional plans are in place that prioritise and integrate a full range of supportive recruitment, organising, bargaining, campaigning and member engagement strategies and activities. In Northern Ireland these have included effective partnership working between branches and the staff team; our pay campaigns in health and education and for a living wage across all sectors; our challenges to privatisation, unsafe staffing and service closures; our public policy campaigns including our Free School Meals for All campaign; challenging cuts to government funding to the community and voluntary sector; and the development of the UNISON College NI as a key organising resource.

**UNISON College:** The UNISON College NI continues to thrive. Last year over 4,000 members participated in the

3 aspects of our programme. Our member learning offer included over 700 courses free to all members in areas from autism awareness to communication skills. Our programme embarked on an ambitious outreach project this year creating further learning opportunities for members in the workplace with negotiated time off.

Our Union Learning Fund Project offered OET/ IELTS preparation classes, Open University K102 Introducing Health and Social Care module and a level 3 CACHE Supporting Teaching and Learning Qualification.

Our activist education programme, despite contending with 6 periods of industrial action last year, almost doubled the number of stewards trained and offered bespoke training for activists and branch committees in areas from public speaking and media training to equality laws. We added an additional module to our stewards training with a stage three over two days, six months after they finish stage two. This section focuses on organising and equality.

**Bargaining:** Over the last 12 months our bargaining and negotiating activities demanding pay justice on behalf of members in Northern Ireland intensified further, with thousands of members across health and social care and education support services engaged in industrial action.

UNISON NI representatives participate actively across the union-wide service group executives, with the opportunity to apply the devolution protocol where appropriate.

In the absence of a devolved Government in Northern Ireland, our members were left deeply frustrated by the lack of action by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and UK Government to release funding to resolve pay disputes. This frustration led on January 18th 2024 to the single biggest day of strike action by public sector workers in Northern Ireland in recent history, with thousands of UNISON members joining workers from across a range of public sector trade unions in demanding that funding be released from Westminster.

With the subsequent return of the devolved Executive and Assembly in February 2024, UNISON members who have been engaged in industrial action are seeking that early action is taken to address their issues.

In our integrated **health and social care** system in Northern Ireland, UNISON members have continued their industrial action which had commenced towards the end of 2022.

This included further days of strike action throughout 2023 and on 18th January 2024, which, following the announcement of a pay offer for NHS staff in England, highlighted that UNISON members in Northern Ireland could not be left behind and that pay parity needed to be restored.

Following the restoration of the Executive and early engagement with the new Health Minister, at the time of writing a pay offer is being consulted upon with members under Agenda for Change. The offer restores pay parity on pay bands, which will be uplifted by 5%. In addition, a non-consolidated payment of £1,505 (based on full-time hours) will be made to every staff member. The offer is backdated to April 2023. A key trade union goal in Northern Ireland for the 2024 – 25 pay round will be closing the gap to health workers in Scotland and Wales. At the time of writing the results of the ballot are not yet known.

In **social care**, UNISON Northern Ireland had campaigned successfully for the creation of a Fair Work Forum to deal with longstanding issues of low pay and poor terms and conditions. Whilst the Forum was temporarily paused by the Department of Health at the end of 2022, it has now reconvened following interventions made by UNISON. Through the Forum we are seeking the implementation of commitments made on the real Living Wage and securing decent terms and conditions across the sector, with increasing trade union recognition across the sector a continuing priority.

In **education**, our support services membership in Northern Ireland commenced industrial action towards the end of 2023, due to the lack of funding being made available by the Department of Education to implement a long-awaited pay and grading review. Members have taken two days of strike action to date and continuous action short of strike.

With the return of the Executive and appointment of a new Education Minister, it was hoped that there would be early progress on our pay and grading review. However, funding to support the pay and grading review for education support services workers is not included in the money made available by the UK Government to solve public sector pay disputes in Northern Ireland. At the time of writing, UNISON is actively campaigning for the new Executive to ensure that the 2024/25 budget contains funding earmarked for the pay and grading review.

The legal outcome of the PSNI Agnew case will have an



impact on public and private sector unions bargaining agendas. An entitlement which stretches back twenty years is now in play. The retrospection will run into millions. UNISON NI is receiving the support of our HQ legal team

**Campaigns – Devolution and funding:** The absence of the institutions at Stormont has coincided with a sustained crisis in public spending, with budgets being set by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that led to significant funding cuts across public services and the community and voluntary sector. UNISON NI spoke out.

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## Scotland

Out with pay our major campaigning effort has been around the Scottish Government's National Care Service Bill. This – despite what the name might lead people to think – is a full frontal attack on publicly delivered public services. The aim is to take a huge range of services – social care, social work and community health, out of local government and the NHS to be run by ministerially appointed quangos – which will procure and commission rather than deliver services.

UNISON Scotland has been consistent and active in highlighting the many flaws in the Bill and campaigning for it to be scrapped. We have made that case directly to MSPs and members Scottish Government ministers in person at SNP conference and the Scottish parliament – where UNISON Scotland gave in person evidence to three separate parliamentary committees (the two who have produced reports so far have been highly critical of the Bill). We have worked jointly not just with the Scottish TUC but constructed a 'coalition of concern' of bodies worried about what the bill will do which includes not just the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities but a variety of third Sector bodies who are involved in Social Care.

More importantly we have got thousands of members to engage with their own MSPs highlighting the Bills fails and calling on them not to support the Bill until (at least) the key questions that we have about the future of staff (and their pensions) in local government are answered. The Bill was due to be voted on in March – but such is the level of criticism that the Bill has received that the Scottish Government has delayed this until the end of June. Whilst acknowledging that this is merely a breathing space – we can be proud of the role our efforts have played in making this happen – campaigning works.

**Separate** – but not completely unrelated – to that, we continue our campaigning to get the Scottish Government to take the steps they can to improve public sector finances. Not to meekly accept Tory austerity but to make more and better use of the revenue raising powers at their disposal.

Other campaigning also continues, and our aim is that in Scotland we make the year of the Black Worker a similar success as last year's Disabled Workers focus was. Amongst other initiatives we are taking a motion to this year's Scottish TUC Congress and are planning work involving the Scottish parliament.

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## Cymru/Wales

### Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023

This Act marks a significant milestone in the Welsh Government's commitment to fostering a more collaborative and inclusive approach to policy-making and public procurement. It creates a statutory Social Partnership Council (SPC), to serve as a platform for dialogue on key social, economic, and environmental issues providing advice to ministers. UNISON Cymru/Wales regional secretary Jess Turner has been appointed to the SPC by the First Minister.

UNISON Cymru/Wales has an implementation strategy for the other elements of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, supported by the Campaign Fund. This plan is intended to provide a road map for UNISON regionally and locally to implement the Act effectively. It outlines the key milestones and steps we will be taking including training, bargaining guidance and local negotiation around social partnership structures.

UNISON Cymru/Wales has participated in a Welsh Government working group exploring the possibility of a reduced working week in the public sector along with task and finish groups around the use of Artificial Intelligence in the public sector. It is also participating in work supported by the Workforce Partnership Council around the implementation of the Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence: blueprint high level action plan for the public sector in Wales.

Further, devolved work includes working with Wales TUC on their project with the Welsh Language Commissioner

supporting the implementation of the Welsh Language Standards within Wales. The standards promote and facilitate the Welsh language, and ensure it is not treated less favourably than the English language in Wales.

## Health

The detail around the Cymru Wales NHS pay award and non-pay elements to the award are reported elsewhere in the Annual Report. Work to progress the non-pay elements is resource intensive with an enormous amount of meetings with Welsh government officials.

A key objective is to secure appropriate Continuing Professional Development (CPD) time for all staff to the level provided at Welsh Ambulance of 52 hours per year. The ultimate ambition is to build to parity with medics.

Health in Wales is often referred to as a good example of social partnership in action, where the input of trade unions is valued and sought by employers. It remains to be seen if that collaborative way of working may come under strain with the serious financial challenges ahead. We will continue to be vigilant here.

In July, UNISON members joined hundreds of campaigners to march through Tredegar in South Wales to celebrate 75 years of the NHS. UNISON's then regional secretary, Dominic MacAskill, addressed the rally.

## Local government priorities

At the time of writing, regional activists have met to help develop and implement a joined-up, regional communication and action plan to respond to the local government finance crisis in Cymru Wales in line with the UK national Save our Services (SOS) campaign. This will be a three-year SOS campaign because the cuts are over 3 years, aimed at the general public as the primary audience and will work alongside and in partnership with the UNISON Centre campaign. There will be a clear organising pathway through the plan.

In July 2023, we warned thousands of children across Wales were at risk of going hungry over the summer because of Welsh government's decision to end free school meals support during the holidays. We told the Welsh government it had made the wrong choice and that every politician has a moral duty to intervene and ensure children don't go hungry.

In August we protested when community safety wardens in Caerphilly were to be diverted from tackling anti-social behaviour to policing what goes into residents' recycling bins. We warned the plans were flawed and could back-fire. The unions presented councillors with a comprehensive rebuttal of the proposals, which were never discussed with safety wardens.

In August, to support our industrial action ballot at Newport Live, the leisure and entertainment provider for Newport City Council we held a public leafleting outside that city's Riverfront Theatre, that was showing the film Barbie and our creative efforts won good local publicity. Margot Robbie, star of the film, has spoken publicly about how union members in America are right to strike to improve their livelihoods, and our placards and literature had the slogan written in Barbie pink, Margot Robbie supports unions on strike! And a QR code to a video of her talking about unions.

## Housing

In September UNISON organised a demonstration outside the headquarters of Bron Afon Community Housing in Cwmbran after a below-inflation pay award was imposed on the workforce. We said staff were being forced to use foodbanks to survive while its chief executive was in line to receive a £6,000 pay rise if the pay settlement was forced through.

## Social Care

With a successful motion and fringe event at Welsh Labour conference last year, a motion to this year's Wales TUC Congress and in our responses to numerous Welsh government and Social Care Wales consultations, it is UNISON Cymru that is driving forward what a National Care Service for Wales should look like.

On 3 October, we held two seminars where speakers from CICTAR and APSE explained to council leaders and directors of social services, and to Senedd politicians and ministers the extent of public money removed from the Welsh social care sector in the form of profit by multinational private equity groups.

We intend to commission a report documenting how some Welsh authorities are already bringing care services in-house, so each council can benefit from their experience, and this will be of use to UNISON branches and organisers across the UK.

Exciting initiatives by Carmarthenshire council and elsewhere are not shared by all other councils and in October, Rhondda Cynon Taf council announced plans to outsource remaining care services. A joint union protest rally was held in Pontypridd as UNISON seeks to challenge the privatisation.

UNISON Cymru Wales is submitting evidence for the UK Covid Inquiry via the Wales TUC, and we decided to gather care workers together early, in advance of the formal call for evidence to hear their stories and testimonies of what it was like working on the Covid frontline.

In 2022, the Welsh Government made £48m available to social care providers to fund an uplift to the Foundation Living Wage for registered care workers in Wales. However, months went by and care workers at the private company did not see any extra money in their pay packets.

We have secured good press coverage on the results of Social Care Wales surveys on why care workers and social workers are quitting in large numbers.

In April, care workers at Shaw Healthcare were forced to accept changes to their contracts or face being fired and rehired. They were stripped of a paid 30-minute break and shifts were extended by half an hour. Shaw also banned staff from eating prepared food with residents at meal times, a contractual right. Shaw executives refused to negotiate with UNISON Cymru/Wales and we said in an open letter to Powys County Council, that its care contractor's bullying behaviour was completely unacceptable, and the firm must be reprimanded.

## Schools

We held a very successful second Schools Seminar in February and more than 70 members attended to hear about progress on the teaching assistant job description review, staff well-being, the curriculum for Wales, professional boundaries and the impact of the Additional Learning Needs Act.

The Minister for Education answered participants questions on term-time only pay, low pay and violence at work and the meeting was addressed by the UNISON president.

To inform our response to the Welsh government's consultation, Changes to the Structure of the School Year in February, we surveyed our schools membership and were

very pleased nearly 3,000 people completed our poll. They told us that whilst there was some interest in amending the year, the much higher priorities for them in schools were insufficient staff, workload, reduced budgets, pupil behaviour and pupil attendance. We wrote that we could not understand why the Welsh government has prioritised changing the school year over addressing these things that would really improve children's education.

Elsewhere we have continued to highlight that support staff have not benefitted from the training they need around the new curriculum, something that will undermine its delivery and impact on children's learning.

## Police and Justice

We have continued to campaign for the devolution of probation and youth justice services. We argue you cannot separate crime away from the social factors around it and it must be dealt with in conjunction with other devolved services. A devolved probation service could therefore help reduce crime levels.

## Further Education and Higher Education

Pay in colleges across Wales is negotiated through the Wales Negotiating Committee for Further Education, where UNISON is the lead business support staff trade union represented by our lead for Further Education (co-chair) and 2 lay activists. For 2023/24 we accepted a pay offer of 5% for all staff in Further Education colleges in line with the teachers' pay award. In addition, the Real Living Wage hourly rate of £12 announced in October 2023 was backdated to 1 August 2023.

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## Labour Link

First Minister Mark Drakeford announced he was standing down in December 2023 and we publicly thanked him for his close relationship with the trade union movement and the social partnership act which he helped deliver to place unions at the heart of decision making in Wales.

In January this year, UNISON Cymru Wales' Labour Link committee interviewed both Welsh Labour leadership candidates Vaughan Gething MS and Jeremy Miles MS (both of whom are UNISON members) and voted to support Vaughan Gething to be the next First Minister of Wales and leader of Welsh Labour.

The First Minister and a number of other ministers addressed Cymru Wales' Labour Link Political Forum in Cardiff in January and we continue to have a very good relationship with Senedd members. A total of 18 Labour Senedd members belong to our UNISON group, chaired by Hefin David.

## Equality

In May, UNISON Caerphilly sponsored the first ever Pride event in that town, supporting a bandstand for schools, colleges and youth services as part of a parade.

In May, Betsi Cadwaladr became the first public service employer to sign up to our anti-racism charter. This followed the launch of UNISON's Year of Black Workers 2023 campaign in Cardiff in the company of Welsh government Economy Minister Vaughan Gething. The charter has since been signed by Powys County Council and Cardiff Council.

Home Office plans to house more than 200 asylum seekers in a hotel in Llanelli hit the headlines in June and we were able to make an important intervention in the media stating that refugees in South Wales should have access to decent, dignified and hygienic housing despite a decade of Tory austerity.

## Wales Union Learning Fund

Our Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF) project has delivered learning to 1,300 workers in 2023-24, 50% of whom are UNISON members. The 2024-25 budget has been reduced by 13%, though intensive lobbying by UNISON ensured the cuts were no deeper and we will keep our learning team intact for the next year.

The delivery budget will be significantly impacted, so the team has been examining how to continue to meet targets by obtaining additional external funding and delivering more courses in-house.

Planned training for Cymru Wales members includes numeracy skills to help people understand their payslips and how they can access union assistance if there are problems, as well as courses on dementia support and redundancy support.

The Innovate Trust is an excellent case study of the team using learning to open doors. This private sector care employer actively encouraged staff to join the union to

benefit from sponsored training. This has resulted in 3 new union learn reps, more than 30 new members and a learning agreement which we hope will develop into formal recognition. The team wants to use this as a template for success.

## Campaign Fund

The Campaign Fund Committee approved more than 60 bids in 2023/24. Bids from every UNISON region were successful, with total expenditure on a range of campaign activity across the UK totalling £1.2m in 2023. This included funding for important strategic projects, such as the campaign for a National Care Service, the union's work fighting racism and targeting the far right, and support for Year of LGBT+ workers.

Political activity was supported in all nations of the UK. Funding was provided for the Equalities Coalition in Northern Ireland, for UNISON's presence at Scottish Political Party Conferences, and for a series of workshops supporting the implementation of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act in Wales/Cymru.

The Committee set aside £1m funding in its 2024 budget for the General Election Campaign. This is being used to pay for polling, political advertising and member communication in target constituencies. Regional discretion to approve branch bids up to £5k has been suspended for the duration of the controlled spending period (twelve months before polling day) to enable the union to stick within legislative spending limits.

The Campaign Fund also continued to support the full range of the union's equalities work. This included funding for Black History Month, UN Anti Racism Day and local and regional pride events. Important trade union heritage events, the Durham Miners Gala and Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival, also received funding.

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## Labour Link

With a General Election only a matter of months away, Labour Link's focus over the past twelve months has been twofold - fighting for and winning policies in Labour's manifesto that will change the lives of UNISON members, whilst focusing on supporting Labour candidates who will

stand up for public services and public service workers in Parliament.

At the party's pivotal National Policy Forum meeting last July, UNISON delegates won a raft of changes to Labour's policy platform which will feed into the manifesto, including a commitment to a National Care Service and the New Deal for Working People, which will be the most significant change to employment rights in over four decades.

Meanwhile, the majority of Labour candidates selected in the party's key "battleground" seats have been backed by UNISON, and target seats have been identified where Labour Link activity and resources will be focussed ahead of the General Election. With an eye to the future, work continues on expanding the identification, training and support of UNISON activists who wish to stand for elected office. This will be a key post-election priority, building on training already provided with partners including TULO and the Local Government Association (LGA) Labour Group.

Work to improve the awareness of Labour Link amongst the UNISON membership has continued, with a full rollout of new Labour Link branding which more closely aligns with UNISON's wider branding. Meanwhile, in-depth work through the Member Engagement Programme is targeted at ensuring that joining Labour Link is as easy as possible both for new and existing members.

Labour Link Forums – both regional and national – continue to drive Labour Link's agenda. The 2023 Forum in Newcastle was a success, with speakers including Christina McAnea, Bridget Phillipson and Anas Sarwar. In 2024, the Forum in Glasgow will provide another opportunity for UNISON Labour Link activists to make their voices heard in a critical election year. And thanks to the hard work of the National Committee and the staff who support their work, there is a real opportunity to influence a potential incoming Labour government for the benefit of all UNISON members.

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## Key campaigns in health care

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### Race for Equality

The Race for Equality campaign is our key campaign to challenge racism in the NHS. To complement the branch materials that are a key resource for the campaign, the

Health Team developed and ran training sessions on NHS England's Workforce Race Equality Standards (WRES) across UNISON regions in England, with over 150 activists and regional organising staff attending the training. The training course aims to demonstrate how branches can use WRES as a bargaining tool to hold employers to account on how they are performing on race equality. At the time of writing, the course was due to be rolled out further via regional education officers.

A focus group at Health conference 2023 on disciplinarys and race equality was the springboard for an in-depth, all-day activist workshop in October 2023 on the same theme, featuring a panel of branch secretaries who shared how they had challenged the disproportionate rates of disciplinary action against Black staff in the NHS within their workplaces. Due to high demand, this was repeated again in March 2024. The film showcasing Bath Health branch's project to promote better training for health staff to care for the hair and skin of Black patients was added to the NHS Futures' platform on the Healthcare Support workers' site. The site is a national platform – with the aim that this would encourage other trusts to implement the project.

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.

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### One Team

Our One Team campaign aims to highlight the vital role of non-clinical support staff in the NHS. The campaign moved up a gear last year on our annual One Team Day in November, with the launch of our new 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 almost 800 nominations for the awards.

The judging panel, comprised of lay members from the Operational Services Occupational Group, decided on the final three winners in March.

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## Pay Fair for Patient Care

Over the past year tens of thousands of mainly women Healthcare Assistants in the NHS have organised together to demand the reward, recognition and respect they rightly deserve. HCAs have seen their role evolve and expand to take on more responsibilities, without the pay and recognition to match. While most healthcare support workers are on band 2 pay, many are performing clinical duties and patient observations – tasks which fall under band 3 of the Agenda for Change pay scales. The Health Service Group developed a suite of organising and bargaining resources which aim to support branches in each stage of the campaign.

The campaign was launched in September 2021, with UNISON's first landmark win in Manchester Foundation Trust in March 2022. Two years later the campaign was identified as an Organising to Win One UNISON organising priority. As a result, the campaign has gathered in pace and momentum. Healthcare Assistants have gathered evidence, built support amongst their colleagues, organised marches and protests, and engaged with senior managers to make their case for fair pay. In March 2024, UNISON calculated that at least £65 million had been won in back pay and £25 million in ongoing wage costs. This figure is likely to increase significantly. UNISON members have reported that this has made a huge difference to their lives in the middle of a cost of living crisis.

Whilst many employers have settled the claim without action, some members have been forced to take strike action. In a show of real collective strength, 2000 HCAs in Bedfordshire and South and North Tees took to the picket lines on March 11th. Their message to their employer was clear – pay us what we are owed. In a bitter and protracted dispute, HCAs in the Wirral, stood firm in their fight for fair pay. After many days on the picket line, they returned a second stronger industrial action mandate which forced their employer back to the table. These workers demonstrated that with determination, courage and strong organising they could win big. Investment in a five-phase plan to win organising strategy supported by the Strategic Organising Unit, additional focussed organising resources through the Branch Support and Organising Fund and branch commitment have resulted in very strong ballot results with high turnouts and huge YES votes.

The campaign has seen a huge surge in HCAs becoming involved in UNISON. In March 2024 more than 600 Pay Fair for Patient Care campaign contacts / activists had

been identified. These workers have been nominated by their peers as a leader on their ward and have been involved in organising committees to support the campaign. Some HCA leaders have been involved in discussing their concerns with senior managers and chief nursing officers, this process has given new activists valuable experience in representing their colleagues. At least 130 new stewards have been identified as a result of campaign activity and many branches report that their branch committees have been re-energised as a result. A Pay Fair for Patient Care specific trained and active plan has been developed to support ongoing activism amongst this cadre of new UNISON activists.

35,000 HCAs have been re-banded in the North West, Scotland and the South West alone and our members had ratified 42 deals in March 2024. Another 40 campaigns are ongoing across UNISON. The national campaign team are reporting into the Health Service Group Executive, the NEC, and the Organising to Win implementation board. This union-wide approach will help us to learn the lessons of this inspiring campaign.

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## Local Government campaigning

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### SOS Funding and anti-cuts campaigning

It has been an incredibly challenging last twelve months for local government finance, perhaps the most difficult since the era of austerity began in 2010. Understandably, campaigning on local government funding and cuts has remained a key priority for the Local Government Service Group over the last year. 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). As always, we have worked closely with UNISON Scotland and UNISON Cymru/Wales to support their work to put pressure on the devolved governments to direct more funding to councils there.

In September, UNISON released details of our new research that shows that the collective funding shortfall faced by all councils (including districts and boroughs) across England, Cymru/Wales and Scotland for the financial year 2024/25 is currently over £3.5bn. The cumulative funding gap facing councils in 2025/26 increases to over £7bn.

UNISON's media team secured great national coverage in the Guardian and Daily Mirror. It was a front page story in the I and we were interviewed about it on LBC News (from 01:12:00). It's also been featured in the Yorkshire Post, Western Daily Post, Local Government Chronicle and Municipal Journal.

UNISON's new council cuts website was updated to show the individual funding shortfalls that all top tier councils across Scotland, Cymru/Wales and England are currently facing for the financial year 2024/25. The interactive map can be accessed on the website here. UNISON members – and members of the public - can click on the map to see what the situation is like in their local area. We have 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 website allows people to use this email action tool to send a message to their local MP/Senedd member/Member of the Scottish Parliament calling for more urgent funding for councils. To date, around two thousand members have used the email action and we would like all UNISON activists to promote the website and email action tool to members in their branch.

Approximately 14% of councils indicated that they are not facing any funding shortfall for the financial year 2024/25. However, even for this minority, the financial situation is rapidly deteriorating. Derbyshire County Council, for example, responded to UNISON's Fol request in mid-June, to say it anticipated no shortfall for 2024/25. By the first quarter of 2024 the council had identified a predicted overspend of £46m for the current financial year 2023/24 that it says will prompt some "very painful" budget decisions.

Several other organisations also released reports about the local government funding crisis. The Local Government Information Unit reported that one in ten councils in England were likely to declare effective bankruptcy within the next twelve months. The Local Government Association highlighted how rising inflation and the mounting cost of delivering services have added a further £1bn to local authorities' budget gaps over the next two years. This financial crisis, caused by soaring demand for services whilst central government funding has fallen, has contributed to a series of section 114 notices being issued (such as in Birmingham and Nottingham) whilst other councils have made significant job and service cuts.

In further worrying news for councils in England, the Public Accounts Committee revealed that they have collective debts of almost £100bn. Following the onset of austerity many councils took advantage of a rule change brought in by the Conservative Government and borrowed money to invest in commercial ventures to generate revenue for services. At the top end of the scale, Woking Council has debts approaching £2.6bn following its failed investment schemes, whereas Warrington Council has debts of £1.7bn after its investment approach, which includes ownership of a number of supermarkets in Greater Manchester, solar farms and part ownership of a bank.

There was also bleak news for councils in Cymru/Wales following the provisional Welsh budget settlement in late December. Cymru/Wales UNISON has estimated that there is a shortfall for councils of between £400 – £450m to just maintain the status quo. The region has been making the case to Senedd members on the Finance Committee for greater levels of local government funding. The region highlighted how the funding shortfall is the equivalent to 12,000 job losses and there are potentially 3 or 4 councils in the country that are looking at effective bankruptcy.

The December budget announcement in Scotland was also a major disappointment with the region describing it as a "a bad day for local services and deals a further financial blow to local councils who are already struggling to balance the books and to deliver the vital services our communities rely on". The draft budget allocated £14bn to councils, including more than £500m for new pay offers and £144m for authorities to compensate for a council tax freeze in 2024-25. COSLA said the council tax freeze, which is being requested by the devolved government, is not fully funded because some authorities might have implemented larger rises to help fill their budget gaps.

The Scottish Accounts Commission also issued a report highlighting how inflation had eroded revenue funding by almost 3% meaning that more councils were now reliant on using their reserves to balance the books. Whilst it said that no council was at imminent risk of declaring effective bankruptcy the future outlook was becoming increasingly uncertain.

The final local government settlement from the Westminster Government in February 2024 did see an extra £600m in funding provided for councils in England (with extra money

going to the Scottish and Cymru/Wales governments via the Barnett formula) but it has failed to stem the growing financial crisis.

The Spring Budget by the Westminster Government in early March 2024 did nothing to provide any meaningful additional funding for councils in England. The Welsh Government received an extra £170m and the Scottish Government £293m in additional funding through the Barnett formula, money which could potentially be used to help fund council services in both countries.

Across the year, UNISON Centre staff from different departments have been providing ongoing support to Birmingham and Nottingham UNISON branches alongside all other local government branches. A series of webinars have been run for staff and activists and new and refreshed campaign resources have been developed. These are now available on the updated UNISON Save our Service webpage and include campaign guides, graphics and videos to help branches start to build their campaigns. We have continued to provide a series of courses on local government finance in tandem with the Local Government Information Unit across the year.

UNISON convened and held a successful parliamentary briefing session about the funding crisis alongside promoting the work of our 2023 Local Service Champions winners. We also met with two members of the Shadow Local Government team to brief them about our findings on cuts to council services and the wider financial crisis and to try and influence the Labour Party's thinking ahead of the 2024 General Election.

In Cymru/Wales, UNISON officials worked with the Welsh Local Government Association to brief Senedd members on the state of local council finances in an effort to improve the funding settlement received by the sector.

The service group also submitted various FOI requests across the last twelve months to all councils across the UK to accurately capture the extent of the damage done to various local government services (such as libraries, swimming pools, public toilets, children's centres, youth centres etc.). The data will be used to populate a new and improved version of our council cuts website later in 2024. We also hope we will be able to achieve significant media coverage about the damage that has been caused to local councils since 2010 and of the need for more funding. The data will also be used to support our

parliamentary campaigning work ahead of the upcoming Westminster General Election in 2024.

We have compiled a comprehensive amount of data detailing how many youth centres and children's centres have been closed by local councils between 2010 and 2023, which we will be aiming to publicise in advance of the Local Government Conference.

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### Local Service Champions Campaigning

Over the past year, UNISON's Local Service Champions Awards have again celebrated the contribution UNISON members make to delivering vital local government services. The awards shine a light for the public on the often-overlooked work of our members. They provide an opportunity to boost members' morale while bolstering our campaign work lobbying both national and local politicians for improved council funding and demonstrating to employers that UNISON members deserve the pay rise UNISON fights for each year.

The awards were hotly contested with UNISON receiving nearly 850 nominations from across the UK. The winners received their awards at Local Government Conference from UNISON President, Andrea Egan, and the then Shadow Secretary of State for Housing and Communities, Lisa Nandy MP.

The overall winner was Jade Carter-Williams, an environmental health officer from UNISON's Kensington and Chelsea branch. Films of the winners were produced and promoted with widespread coverage across social media.

UNISON held its Champions Day in October giving branches the chance to celebrate the 'champions' in their own workplaces. Branches were able to run recruitment and organising projects supported with campaign materials and highlight the importance of protecting and promoting local government jobs and services.

This year, Champions Day received particularly strong levels of engagement across social media with thousands of posts promoting the day. This included many from branches and regions, along with a blog and video support from the General Secretary. There was also a significant increase in the number of Labour MPs supporting the day by posting videos online. The Local Government Information Unit supported UNISON's Twitter account



on Champions Day and hosted a UNISON blog about this campaign.

UNISON worked with a journalist to capture positive testimonies from the public and councillors about the contribution our members make to local communities. The resulting publication was used to advocate for the crucial work UNISON members do at a parliamentary event held in November and the publication was subsequently distributed widely to national politicians.

There was a healthy turnout from MPs at the November event where they were also able to meet the three winners of UNISON's 2023 Local Service Champions Awards and hear first-hand about the reality of working in a sector where funding levels have been cut to the bone. MPs were presented with an overview of UNISON's Freedom of Information research into funding shortfalls and able to discuss the threat to services directly with our winners who deliver these services on a daily basis.

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## Higher education campaigns

UNISON's work in higher education over the past year has been dominated by supporting our members and branches in fighting for better pay and conditions for our members. Alongside our sister unions in higher education, we have taken a programme of strike action across the UK in support of our pay campaign, while seeking to take forward talks with UCEA on workloads, contract types, equality pay gaps and the pay spine. Campaigns on local pay have also continued, with branches making gains for members through local action and negotiations.

UNISON has continued to lobby the shadow higher education minister and the wider shadow education team on a variety of HE issues. The Shadow Minister for Higher Education spoke at the 2023 universities and colleges seminar and he committed to working closely with UNISON if Labour forms the next Government.

UNISON ran a series of workshops and plenary sessions at the 2023 universities and colleges seminar, which was a joint event hosted by the Higher Education Service Group Executive (HESGE) and the Further Education and 6th Form Committee. It was well attended, and issues covered included the HE pay campaign, organising around pensions, campaigning for a four-day week, organising around HE

finances, digital organising, the gendered impact of the cost of living crisis, workplace stress, tackling racism, wholly owned subsidiaries, job evaluation and insourcing. As part of our work on the Year of Black Workers, the keynote speaker was Sonia Bassey MBE, who talked about leadership, legacy, and allies.

UNISON continued to deliver training on job evaluation schemes – training was delivered on Higher Education Role Analysis to branch activists from across the UK. UNISON has continued to lobby and campaign for higher education to be well funded from general taxation, promoting the case for free tuition for all, with maintenance grants and measures to support participation for all students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. A new workshop on 'understanding HEI finances' was delivered at the UNISON universities and colleges seminar. This highlighted the massive funds available to some institutions and how to find out how excessive the pay of a particular vice chancellor or principal actually is. It also demonstrated that not all HEIs are in this situation, and that many universities are not in a strong financial position, and this position has been reflected in our social media activity.

UNISON branches continued to campaign against outsourcing and have achieved successes in getting services brought back in-house. In order to tackle the growing prevalence of wholly owned subsidiaries within education, a new guide was produced on tackling wholly owned subsidiaries at a local level within higher and further education. The guide was launched at the universities and colleges seminar with an accompanying presentation and workshop. The 2023 HE freedom of information request included questions on outsourcing and wholly owned subsidiaries to provide information to branches and regions to use in local campaigns against marketisation in higher education.

UNISON has continued to campaign on health and safety issues throughout the year and to support branches on health and safety issues. Through joint working with the employers and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in the Higher Education Safety and Health committee (HESH) we have sought to highlight the key issues for UNISON members and improve workplace safety. Among our key campaigns, we have pushed the employers to work with us on improving ventilation in higher education institutions; worked with HESH, on joint principles for keeping campuses safe during emergency health situations; and monitored and highlighted the risks caused by RAAC following the scandal that emerged in relation to public buildings in 2023.

As part of UNISON's Year of Black Workers, a working group was set up focusing on tackling race-related issues within higher education. The universities and colleges seminar included significant focus on the Year of Black Workers, and the annual HE members survey asked Black members about their experiences working in HE, and what more they think their employer and union can do to tackle racism in the workplace. The survey was also used to promote the Advance HE Race Equality Charter mark.

UNISON campaigned on various disabled members' issues in 2023. We worked with branches to establish where there is no agreed reasonable adjustment passport or policy, where there is no agreed paid disability leave policy and where there is no elected disabled members officer. The regular online Disabled Members Officers and Contacts training was advertised to branches with higher education members.

UNISON has continued to promote the call from the Parliamentary Women and Equalities Committee Inquiry into Transgender Equality for all higher education institutions to take proactive steps to promote trans equality including providing all staff with gender identity training and a trans champions scheme.

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## School cuts

The union was at the forefront of a high profile media and political campaign to highlight the dangerous impact that capital funding cuts since 2010 were having on school building safety. We also launched an online school funding campaign tool for members to lobby their MPs on the wider impact of cuts. In summer 2023, UNISON worked with the National Education Union (NEU) and other education unions and organisations to organise a well-attended lobby of parliament on school and college funding. The union also worked with other organisations to highlight the devastating impact of the underfunding of SEND provision. UNISON's annual 'Stars in our School' event also helped showcase the vitally important work of school support staff as part of the union's political work on school funding.

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## Further Education

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### Pay

In England, a pay recommendation was made in September 2023 of:

- a consolidated uplift to all staff of 6.5%, subject to affordability
- colleges to decide if to implement FLW
- commitment to workload working group proposal to set up a working group on 'what national bargaining may look like'
- outside of bargaining, unions and employers will work together on a Just Transition to Net Zero

In Wales, pay for staff in Further Education colleges is linked to pay for school teachers and pay awards are fully funded by the government. This caused a delay due to prolonged bargaining and negotiations in the schools sector. A pay claim for 6.5% was submitted in July 2024. The pay offer of 5% for 2023/24 was made in November 2023 and backdated to 1 August. In addition, the Real Living Wage hourly rate of £12 per hour was honoured with the understanding that no-one would receive a pay rise of less than 5%.

In Scotland, a failure to agree a pay offer since September 2022 means that the pay offer has rolled over and is now a three-year pay deal covering 22/23, 23/24, and 24/25. After many negotiations, the offer now stands at a £2,000 flat rate increase for 22/23, £1,500 for 23/24 and £1,500 for 24/25, the latter contingent on receiving extra government funding, however, the offer comes with compulsory redundancies. The joint unions are asking for a £2000 hardship payment whilst talks on compulsory redundancies continue.

In Northern Ireland, directly employed staff benefit from NJC pay, terms and conditions. Payment was initially delayed due to the lack of a functioning national executive.

In 6th form colleges, a pay award of 6.5% to all staff was agreed and applied from the 1 September 2023 with a further uplift for lower paid staff of between 1.66% and 2% from 1 March 2024 to ensure compliance with the national living wage and maintain pay differentials.

**Campaigns:** In our campaign for proper national bargaining in FE (England), we have been pushing employers to meet and explore what this may look like, but we are meeting

opposition currently, which was not unexpected. We held a round-table event with Labour MPs in July to progress the cause and also spoke on it at a Portcullis House drop-in event in February 2024. Our position is strongly supported by the whole trade union side and will be a key part of the 2024/25 pay claim.

The Champions in our Colleges event was run for the second time nationally on 9 February 2024. This year, the campaign organisation ran smoothly and efficiently, with merchandise available in the UNISON shop, the nominate a champion competition, a webpage of dedicated resources, a parliamentary drop-in event and plenty of communications to branches, to activists and to members to encourage involvement in the event. Disappointingly, the event did not attract a huge deal of interest, with only five branches ordering merchandise and only fifty-five entries into the nominate a star competition. We will be reviewing the event to ensure better take-up and engagement next year.

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## Early Years

UNISON is campaigning for high quality early education and childcare for our members and for improved pay and conditions for the early years workforce.

We are a founder member of the Early Education and Childcare Coalition which includes the TUC, other trade unions, charities, research organisations and academics to campaign for reform of the childcare sector including better pay and conditions for the early years workforce.

We made a comprehensive submission to the Labour Party’s review of early education and childcare, focusing on the need to improve pay in the sector and to increase the capacity of the public sector to deliver the high-quality provision that our youngest children deserve.

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## Energy and the Cost of Living

The Energy Service Group has continued its work in 2023/24 amidst the ongoing cost of living crisis and the major role that the significantly increased price of domestic energy has played in this. Some estimates point to almost 40% of households having to spend more than 10% of their income on energy bills, with knock-on effects including significant rises in levels of residential debt, and greater levels of fuel poverty the inevitable results. All of this has thrown a major spotlight on to the cost of energy and the related matters of energy efficiency and security and made these issues key topics of concern for politicians and the public.

UNISON has campaigned for some time for an ambitious, overarching UK energy policy that includes a comprehensive, national programme of domestic energy efficiency improvements to ensure that UK homes are warm and well-insulated, their energy requirements are environmentally sustainable, and where heating costs are reasonable and stable for consumers, at a time of significant energy market turbulence. The UK has some of the most energy-inefficient housing stock in Europe, and an improvements programme delivered through a publicly owned energy retail sector and funded through a progressive taxation policy would provide the security consumers need, reduce overall energy consumption, keep UK households warm, and help the UK to prepare for the transition to Green energy generation.

As well as this, with the central role of energy in the cost of living crisis the case for a social energy tariff, where the most financially vulnerable are protected and can pay for energy without having to resort to going into debt, continues to increase. UNISON has continued to campaign in this area and has made the case to the energy regulator Ofgem, to senior politicians and industry leaders and has sought the collaboration and support of civil society and the wider trade union movement, campaign groups, public policy organisations and others.

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## Supporting our Energy members

UNISON members working across the energy sector and their families are as personally aware of the pressures and challenges of the rising cost of living as other workers, however many UNISON Energy members in customer-facing roles dealing with bill queries, payment concerns

from energy customers often must bear the brunt of public anxieties on the cost of energy when interacting with these customers as part of their job. This is having its own impact on our members, with reports of stress, harassment and abuse from customers, threats, and personal verbal attacks on the rise.

Our members should never feel threatened or be the target of any form of abuse, while undertaking their job. UNISON is looking to work with members to establish the extent and nature of this problem, to make the case to employers who might be unaware that this is becoming a greater concern for their staff, and work with them to put in place policies and procedures – as well as dedicated support for those who need it – to ensure that workers in this sector can do their jobs effectively while also being able to handle difficult interactions if and when they occur.

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## The Energy Retail Market

As UNISON predicted years ago, the lack of effective regulation in the energy retail sector, which facilitated new, smaller entrants to the market to challenge the legacy suppliers, but which did not have the financial resilience to withstand significant market shocks, has become a major problem. Beginning with a series of new, smaller employers within which UNISON and other unions had no recognition and ending with many dozens of company insolvencies when the rising global price of energy precipitated the crisis, and where the lost customer credits of these companies had to be mutualised, thereby raising the energy costs to consumers still further, this experiment in light-touch regulation was always a disaster waiting to happen.

UNISON has responded to numerous consultations from the regulator Ofgem on how to reform energy market regulations to prevent this in future. It was positive to observe recent Ofgem announcements on new requirements for energy retail suppliers to ringfence capital to guarantee consumer credit balances in the event of these companies going to the wall, as well as ‘suitability checks’ on new entrants to the market. However, UNISON maintains its position that only a publicly owned, publicly accountable and effectively regulated energy retail sector, which puts the needs of the public ahead of increased energy usage and profits, can deliver for the UK.

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## Energy Transmission and Distribution

The anticipated acquisition and nationalisation of the Electricity System Operator (ESO) arm of National Grid has now been completed, following a major announcement by the UK Government. The ESO is now in public ownership and will become the new National Energy System Operator (NESO), which will form a major part of how the UK plans and progresses its transition into a sustainable national energy platform and a more sustainable future arrangement. UNISON is a major trade union presence in National Grid and has been engaged throughout this process.

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## Water, Environment and Transport (WET)

2023 was an unprecedented year of frustration for workers up and down the country. It was a year of industrial disputes and strike actions across different sectors where the only option was that hard-working people in society went on strike demanding a decent wage at a period of high inflation and increase in cost-of-living standards.

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## Environment Agencies (EA, NRW and SEPA)

UNISON members working in the Environment Agency (EA) took action over pay in February 2023 for the first time (2022/2023 pay award) and followed by series of action short of strike action (ASOS) for most part of 2023. As a result, the government awarded a one-off non-consolidated cost of living payment of £1500 in June 2023 across all government departments including the Environment Agency. However, this payment did not address decades of pay constraints members have experienced.

Due to the action our members took in 2023, in November, workers were offered and accepted an average pay award of 6.35% for 2023/2024. The largest single cash settlement received by Agency workers in 10 years. Inflation may have gone down; our members are still facing huge pressures from the cost-of-living crisis and salaries are still far below 2010 levels percentage-wise.

At the time of writing this report UNISON and other recognised unions in the Agency are in the process of putting together a pay claim for 2024/2025, and also seeking plans from the employer on what a transformational pay flexible business case would look like.

After a prolonged period of negotiations at Natural Resources Wales (NRW), members were balloted on the employer's offer of 5% for 2023/2024 in January 2024. Members voted and accepted the offer – backdated to April 2023.

**Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA):** In 2023/24 UNISON SEPA branch has consistently supported and advocated for our members throughout this time whilst continuing with campaigning for better terms and conditions. SEPA is bound by the Scottish Government's pay policy, which was published in March for 2023/24.

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## Pay

SEPA UNISON branch submitted the pay claim for 2023/24 in June 2023 seeking an inflationary pay rise to reflect cost of living crisis and the lack of pay progression over the last 10 years faced by our members. A two-year deal was accepted by members – year 1, 7% and the second year 3% with 2 days additional leave and 1 wellbeing day.

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## Water Industry

The Water Industry continues to dominate media coverage lately over illegal sewage discharges into rivers and pipe leaks due to underinvestment in the sector. In England and Wales 2023/2024 Pay awards ranges between 6 and 7%.

Scottish Water achieved 8% after industrial action ballot which was called off at the last minute in November 2023. Negotiation is ongoing for a new pay and grading structure.

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## Transport Sector

Passenger Transport Forum (PTF – WYCA, WMCA and TfGM) and South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority mirror Local Govt NJC pay settlement of £1925. Currently considering elements of 2024/2025 pay claim. Last year Canal and Rivers Trust (CRT) settled at 10%+ over 18 months.

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## Community service group

Community is a relatively new service group in UNISON with more than 85,000 members who work for voluntary, charitable, and not-for-profit organisations, including housing associations, major charities, and those providing social care from the third sector. Our members cover a comprehensive range of services in every aspect of public service delivery, across all the devolved nations and legislative frameworks.

In addition to the Community Service Group Executive at national level, there are three sector groups that provide the opportunity to focus on specific issues within each: Community and Voluntary Sector, Housing Associations and Major Charities and two representatives on UNISON's National Executive Council.

Community is a growth area for the union although not without its challenges due to the nature of contracts, staff turnover, and changing working practices like more home or hybrid working. Furthermore, the economic environment that has impacted everything, hitting members hard in what were already testing times for the sector.

Additionally, community members are themselves a truly diverse workforce working in a range of organisations specifically dedicated to providing services to Black, LGBT+, Disabled people and Women often on the cusp of closure because of precarious funding streams.

Equally, where service provision continues; years of contract renewal through tendering has eroded workers' rights and the level of service provision. Community members are often at the sharp end of unscrupulous practices like "fire and rehire", and it is often these members who keep services going using their own time and money.

Organising and developing activism across national employers is challenging. Members are often spread across regions and attached to geographical branches from where the services were originally outsourced, and this is only likely to increase.

The Community Service Group nationally would welcome further engagement with the larger service groups to explore ideas around forming more community service specific bargaining units within this context. Currently, there are less than a handful of community specific/dedicated branches across the union.

GDPR rules add an additional layer of complexity that makes maintaining records in Community more complex.

None the less, our members are resilient to dealing with new challenges. Prospective employers and workers still come to UNISON for the benefits of partnership working and the range of benefits that come with a recognised, unionised workplace.

Different regions and nations have responded by developing new skills and best practice, including model recognition, or organising campaigns with a high turnout for taking action; allocating community specific organisers and resources to grow the sector and utilising digital organising.

At national level Community officers work with the Bargaining Support Unit, Learning and Organising Support (LAOS), and the Strategic Organising Unit (SOU) to ensure greater co-ordination and complimentary support and sharing and developing best practice with colleagues and activists across our regions and branches.

Initiatives include national webinars, surveys, co-ordination of pay and bargaining information and best practice guidance and training aimed directly at Community members.

The Community and Voluntary Sector Committee has continued to work with LAOS to run national webinars and workshops targeted at Community members who may not have had much involvement in the union to date, encouraging them to get more active. In July 2023 lunchtime webinars on lone working and dealing with aggression and violence in the workplace, were run which were then followed up by half day trainings on the same topics in September. These proved to be extremely popular, demonstrating how many Community members face these issues in their workplaces.

Following the passing of Motion 5 at the 2023 Community conference, which highlighted concerns about the trend that these costs were being passed on to new employees; a cross-service group survey was launched to get members' feedback on this issue, which ran throughout the summer. Over 11,000 members across the union responded to the survey, highlighting that this is an issue not just in Community but across Health, Social Care, and Private Contractors. The results of the survey were written up in a report which was launched in parliament in December 2023, and members affected by this issue were invited

to speak from the London Community and Voluntary Organisations branch who originally moved this motion at conference.

An updated bargaining guide on Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks has been produced and work continues with the Labour Link with a view to getting commitments included in Labour policy. The DBS checks campaign is now part of the union's wider Cost of Living campaign, see chapter one. Equally on the practices of "fire and re-hire", a joint campaign was established with the TUC.

UNISON Centre hosted the National Care Summit on 27th February 2024. Dimensions is one of our national target employers who previously delivered a 78,000-signature petition to Downing Street to call on Government to improve training, recognition and pay for social care workers. Representatives from Dimensions attended the National Care Summit and more specifically have been invited to further shape the roadmap to a National Care Service with shadow ministers.

This year's Community Seminar and Conference took place on International Women's Day on Friday 8th to Saturday 9th March 2024 in Chester. The seminar had a stimulating agenda including: NCVO Campaign for better funding in public sector charity contracts; UNISON Cost of Living campaign; UNISON National Care Service Campaign; Pensions; Year of the LGBT+ Worker; Digital Organising and HandS Hazards Campaign.

Angela Rayner MP, Shadow Deputy Prime Minister, was the keynote speaker and told community conference: "During this election, you are the stewards of the New Deal for working people. "We need better terms and conditions. We need strong collective bargaining, and we need to repeal anti-trade union legislation that the Tories brought in.

"So, while we're in these rooms, we should keep pushing. We should set our bar really, really high and we should keep pushing to make sure we do better. But to our members, to our friends and family, to our neighbours, we have to tell them what our movement's success are."

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## Police and Justice

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### Campaigns

In October 2023, we launched our We Are Police Staff campaign at Police and Justice Conference in Edinburgh. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the vital roles which our members play in keeping communities safe across England, Scotland, and Wales. The campaign draws attention to the budget crisis which is affecting all forces in the three nations. Budget deficits threaten police staff jobs and have led to police officers being taken off the beat and put into our members' roles to save money.

UNISON's members in the Probation Service have continued to face staffing shortages and unmanageable workloads which is damaging to the health and wellbeing of staff and to the delivery of public protection. The joint probation unions launched our Operation Protect campaign in June 2023 to combat the workloads crisis and to achieve reductions in the volume of work.

UNISON continues to campaign for probation to be removed from civil service control and given back to local democratic and operational management. We are working with the Labour Group of Police and Crime Commissioners to seek to achieve this aim. We oppose the latest Ministry of Justice attempts to take probation further from its local roots via the controversial One-HMPPS programme.

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### Pay

Police staff members in England and Wales voted overwhelmingly in favour of accepting a 7% pay offer. UNISON issued our Know Your Rights checklist to remind members of their contractual entitlements. Claims were submitted to the Police Staff Council in respect of medical expenses and public service leave. We continued to make the case for tangible benefits to come out of the Police Covenant for police staff.

In Scotland, police staff members voted to accept a pay offer which was worth £1,900 to lower paid staff and 7% to the higher paid.

June 2023 saw the three probation unions submit a claim to re-open the current three year pay award which was negotiated ahead of the cost-of-living crisis. Talks have so

far been inconclusive, and our Probation Service Committee is resolved to conduct a consultative ballot on members' willingness to take industrial action in the event that the negotiations fail.

In the Child and Family Courts Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) a 4% pay rise was imposed on staff despite UNISON members voting against it.

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## National Private Contractors Forum

UNISON has seen significant activity in private contractors in the last year. The Us2 pay campaign highlighted the pay inequality for those staff denied the NHS lump sum payment on the basis that they are outsourced. Industrial action in Sodexo, ISS, Mitie and other companies delivered movement from the government. A review of the support for private contractor members to organise at branch, regional and national level is much needed. Unfortunately, last year's prioritised motion was not heard at conference to put in place a system to engage with private contractor members – but we hope that this will be debated at NDC 2024.

## Chapter two

# Supporting our branches

### Membership 2023 Annual Line Count Process

Our full Membership as at 30th September 2023 was 1,235,250 whilst the membership for 2022 was 1,210,250. Therefore, membership increased by 25,000 or 2.1% in the reported period. We expect this figure to be within a tolerance of  $\pm 0.5\%$  so UNISON's membership figure is between 1,229,074 and 1,241,426.

#### Regional UNISON membership

On completion of the NEC/RMS line count process, the Regional membership for 2023 is shown in Table below:

Membership by Region	2023 Full members
Eastern	83,000
East Midlands	80,250
Greater London	118,000
Northern	71,750
Northern Ireland	48,750
North West	180,250
Scotland	162,250
South East	98,250
South West	77,500
Wales	84,500
West Midlands	106,500
Yorkshire and Humberside	124,250

The above figures do not include retired members.

#### Movement – to support Industrial Action ballots

UNISON's communication tool to support "Get Out The Vote" campaigns, has been extensively used since its introduction in 2022. Nearly 100 national and local ballots have been supported by using its consolidated text messaging and phone banking functionality enabling large groups of activists and staff to work side-by-side in campaigning activity. The system and approach enables UNISON to contact large numbers of members in a short

period of time in a safe and secure, GDPR-compliant way. This has allowed UNISON to build an extensive data set of ballot participation data which is being used to inform future campaigns and thinking. The system and its usage continue to be optimised based on learning from each ballot.

#### Branch Support and Organising Fund

The Branch Support and Organising Fund (BSOF) saw successful bids and project activity taking place across all regions in 2023.

The BSOF receives 2% of annual income, and in 2023 this was equivalent to £3.6 million, with funding split across regions according to membership size. Some regions have branch specific projects and have secured match funding from branches to undertake these projects. This match-funding amounted to £580,000 in 2023.

Any reserves held in Regional Pool funds, and unspent BSOF funds in any given year are accumulated by the relevant region and carried forward for use in future years.

All regions currently have active BSOF projects taking place, with regions employing a mixture of Local and Area Organisers. These projects had a significant impact on organising activity and outcomes in 2023. Monthly BSOF reports for the latter half of 2023 show over 3,000 workplace organising visits and over 180 new activists recruited because of BSOF funded activity. Predominantly focused on the "One UNISON" priority organising campaigns of Pay Fair for Patient Care, target Multi Academy Trusts (MAT), and Social Care in the devolved nations, BSOF projects have secured new MAT recognition agreements, substantial back pay awards for Health Care Assistants, and collective agreements around paid breaks, annual leave, and mandatory training in Northern Ireland social care providers.

More BSOF funded projects are launching in 2024. With around 70 BSOF funded organising projects now underway, the fund has become a vital resource for meeting UNISON's organising objectives. Project monitoring and reporting arrangements continue to improve to ensure good use of resource and ensure key lessons and best organising practice are captured to inform wider UNISON organising activity.



As the fund continues to develop in 2024 Regions and Branches are encouraged to consider more cross regional bids and bids to fund the secondment of activists to further increase the resourcing of the priority “One UNISON” organising campaigns.

Further information, including BSOF applications, can be found here: [www.unison.org.uk/the-new-branch-support-and-organising-fund](http://www.unison.org.uk/the-new-branch-support-and-organising-fund)

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## Branch Procurement Service

The National Procurement Service for Branches is one of a number of measures included in Motion 72 which was passed at Special Delegate Conference in 2021, following the Branch Resources Review over the previous two years.

The service gives access to central arrangements for goods and services, as well as information tailored for UNISON branches. We’ve agreed deals with our preferred suppliers including mobile phones, computers, copiers, stationery, furniture and car hire.

Branches can of course choose to buy elsewhere if they wish, as using national suppliers is not mandatory. However, by using this service they won’t have to spend time shopping around and checking terms and conditions. Branches can rely on the Procurement team to carry out due diligence, negotiate commercial terms and ensure suppliers meet UNISON’s ethical and sustainability policies.

We only offer competitive arrangements with ethical providers that we are confident will provide an excellent service and won’t oversell.

There’s also a Procurement Toolkit to help branches check current practices and establish simple procedures to get the best value goods and services.

### How to access the UNISON’s Branch Procurement Service

- Via the Branch Service portal at <https://branchservice.unison.org.uk>
- Complete the form <https://unisonprocurement.freshdesk.com/support/tickets/new>
- Email [b.procurement@unison.co.uk](mailto:b.procurement@unison.co.uk)

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## CaseWeb system

The CaseWeb system provides a safe and secure platform for managing and storing all casework for a branch and has continued to be rolled out successfully across interested branches in 2023.

There are now 301 live branches – this accounts for 41% of branches, covering 58% of UNISON members. There have been further developments to the system, with new information pages added and online training and FAQ videos being developed for 2024.

Smaller branches (2,000 members or less) can access CaseWeb with a 50% subsidy on the full fee of £72 per month, with no reduction in access or support. Full training on the system is provided to all branches, along with ongoing advice as required.

In addition to branches, all regions use CaseWeb, providing a streamlined process for escalating cases as needed. This is further strengthened by relevant national departments also using CaseWeb, including Professional Services Unit, Pensions Unit, There for You (Welfare), Legal Services and Managers in Partnership (MiP).

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## An Expenses System for Branches

Branch Resources Review and the subsequent motion passed at Conference promised the provision of an online branch expenses module within the Online Branch Accounts systems (OLBA). This new tool was designed to help and support branch treasurers and activists by making end to end expense processing quicker and easier to save time and effort. The online expense system links directly into banking records and the reconciliations process as well as the accounting and reporting functions.

The system was developed and was being piloted as reported this time last year. Branches were encouraged to sign up for the pilots with the training help and support that was provided by colleagues in Finance.

Following a successful pilot of the online branch expenses system in 2023, which provided UNISON with valuable insights and feedback, updates were made to the system. The anticipated launch date was postponed due to these necessary developments and the subsequent testing required from the Finance side. With the system now

modified, the team is confident that the new system can be rolled out in April 2024.

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### Branch access to the Campaign Fund

The Campaign Fund has continued to support branch campaigns. Although regional discretion to approve branch bids up to £5k was suspended during the controlled spending period ahead of the General Election, bids have still been encouraged. Regions now make a recommendation, with the Campaign Fund Committee maintaining oversight to ensure the union keeps within the non-party campaigner spending limit for activity defined as controlled expenditure. During 2023 the Campaign Fund has supported branch anti racism projects, research to challenge job losses and campaigns against local government cuts.

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### Bargaining Support

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

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

Revisions have taken place to over 40 bargaining guides and model agreements over the year to ensure that they carry the most up-to-date material for negotiations, while new guides have been developed, most notably in relation to wholly owned subsidiaries and in support of the Year of Black Workers.

In addition to its publication of general guides, Bargaining Support continually responds to enquiries from branches and officers, offering particular assistance in account analysis to help with the assembling of pay claims.

Bargaining Support's other major areas of work over the year have included the development of UNISON's evidence to the Low Pay Commission on the National Minimum Wage rates, maintaining the Bargaining Database as a central repository of agreements and promoting our services across the union

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### Strategic Organising Unit (SOU)

**Organising Framework:** The current Organising Framework (OF) is now five years old. The Organising to Win strategy identifies the OF as the primary planning tool for base organising and includes a commitment for a review to ensure it is fit for that purpose. OF questions were re-written in 2023 to provide a clearer focus on organising activity and outcomes, with a new section inserted to inform a more fundamental 2024 review of the OF. Discussions continue with relevant UNISON departments and committees to review the purpose, process and platform to ensure the organising framework remains a valuable evaluation and planning tool for UNISON branches, and provides valuable data to inform regional and national decision making and resource allocation.

**National Strategic Organising Unit:** The national SOU increases strategic organising activity and capacity across the union by working in collaboration with Service Groups, Regions and Branches to deliver campaigns in line with national organising priorities. Although a relatively small team, the SOU aims to have a big impact by providing additional skilled organising capacity where needed, testing organising initiatives, and sharing best practice across the union. SOU activity in 2023/4 has been primarily in support of the national "One UNISON" priority organising campaigns of NHS "pay fair for patient care" and targeted multi academy trust schools. Support for both has included supporting national officers and campaign committees to plan and coordinate campaign activity, providing mapping and research, delivering organising activity, delivering organiser training and support, networking of regional campaign leads, and measuring organising impact to ensure key lessons are captured.

The SOU has also delivered a series of skills-based webinars to activists and staff and worked with LAOS to design and deliver new organising skills and methodology training to organising staff. SOU continues to run the online activist "Organising Space" and the "Mobile Organising Unit" Van. The SOU continues to develop UNISON's vital work on organising migrant workers.

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### Organising to Win

Passed at 2022 NDC, Organising to Win (OtW) is the national organising strategy of the union. It provides a vision of a stronger UNISON and a plan to increase member

participation, build a bigger and more representative activist base, and achieve sustainable membership growth.

2023 saw a high level of organising, campaigning and bargaining activity, supported and promoted by multiple teams for maximum impact. All contributed to:

- net membership growth was achieved for the second consecutive year;
- a record 209,000 new members joined in 2023;
- 4,097 new stewards, health and safety (HandS) representatives and union learning (ULR) representatives were appointed in 2023. An increase of 56% on 2022;
- 1,648 stewards were Employment Relations Act (ERA) trained in 2023. An increase of 38% on 2022. Training also increased for HandS and ULR representatives.

To consolidate, and build on these achievements, implementation of the Organising to Win strategy over the past year has included:

- resourced Social Care organising projects in each of the devolved nations;
- coordinated Multi Academy Trust organising campaigns targeting 607 schools in 21 employers across every English Region;
- twenty-nine active “Pay Fair for Patient Care” (PFfPC) Health Care assistant re-banding campaigns across the union;
- over 50 Branch Support and Organising Fund (BSOF) funded organising projects;
- extensive sectoral research to inform future organising priorities;
- launch of the UNISON migrant worker member network;
- online welcome events for every social care joiner in 2023;
- new guidelines to achieve Trade Union Act compliant ballots and run successful local disputes;
- organising to Win Impact Assessment tool and guide produced;
- monthly Organising to Win, tools and training webinars;
- UNISON Organiser skills and methodology training developed and delivered;
- a new suite of best practice UNISON organising templates and guides;
- a new best practice Branch guide for effective organising communications.

Since the first PFfPC campaign in 2020, 27 campaigns have now been settled, moving over 17,000 Health Care

Assistants (HCA's) to Band 3, with an annual rise of around 10% / £2k. A total £34m per year plus over £55m in backpay. Membership growth in the target campaign branches has been significant and over 130 new stewards appointed during campaign activity.

Over 480 organising visits were conducted to target MAT schools in September to December 2023, launching the first phase of the campaign to build a stronger UNISON base across 21 target regional and national MATs. In the first term of activity membership growth was achieved, two new recognition agreements were negotiated, 39 new stewards appointed, and new guidance produced on bargaining and organising across branch and regional boundaries.

Significant organising activity is underway in each of the devolved nations, targeting a total of 30 large social care providers. Membership growth, new activist recruitment and development, and positive bargaining outcomes have been achieved. Campaigns are ongoing to build strong unions within key employers and to ensure a “fair work” government agenda with minimum commissioning standards and sectoral bargaining across the whole of devolved nation social care.

All three “One UNISON” priority organising campaign will continue throughout 2024 with new reporting and monitoring arrangements to ensure best practice and key lessons are captured to further improve the UNISON organising approach based on evidence of what works. The OtW implementation board will continue to progress the 80 recommendations contained within the OtW strategy to build an even bigger, stronger UNISON and win for members.

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### **Merlin system replacing RMS**

We are committed to upgrading our current membership systems used by Branches and Staff. The Merlin system will replace the WARMS and RMS membership systems and will provide synergy for all users as we use one system for core membership data. We are now implementing the latest version of Merlin, tailor-made for UNISON, to deliver a more efficient service.

The rollout is expected to commence from July 2024 for Branches, with Staff gaining access later in the year. Over the last year, we've collaborated with Branches and Staff to

ensure Merlin meets our business needs as the scale and scope of the Merlin project is far-reaching and complex with multiple dependencies.

To access Merlin, we'll be adopting the latest security protocols, linking Merlin to a modern e-learning platform called Totara, and upgrading our reporting tools and bulk email facility for Branches. All of this must be done while ensuring system continuity for all other union applications, such as CaseWeb and the online conference system, which are dependent on the union's membership data.

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### **Reasonable Adjustments at Conferences**

The Conference Office continues its work on the OCS to give it the ability to “hold” the information, and to automatically pre-populate when the delegate registers for conference the next time. This reasonable adjustment mini passport will save delegates time and support our Disabled members at conference.

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### **Supporting Delegates at Conference**

The Conference Office also produced some guidance for Branches on Supporting delegates needs at Conference which will ensure that Branches are treating their delegates fairly and equitably when supporting their needs – be it reasonable adjustment, childcare or accommodation and encouraging wider participation from our delegates, who may need some extra support to attend.

## Chapter Three

# Supporting our members

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### Member Engagement Programme

The Member Engagement Programme (MEP), the ambitious series of projects aiming to improve members' experience of the union, continues to progress well.

The programme has members' needs at its heart and is identifying where improvements can be made and aims to deliver the necessary joined up systems and improved data to achieve this. Content aims to be relevant, more personalised and targeted and functionality seamless and intuitive. This should make it easier for members to be informed, become active, actively participate and access support when needed.

Key areas under the MEP umbrella include the UNISON website, MyDetails and Merlin (the replacement for RMS), as well as a data project looking at what information UNISON captures, how and what it is used for and how we can become more data-driven in supporting UNISON's aims and objectives. At the end of the programme, the union will be in a position to measure, understand and improve through targeted intervention areas such as membership recruitment and retention, member satisfaction, participation in democratic processes, campaign engagement and activist engagement.

The programme continues to work closely with the Organising to Win strategy implementation group to ensure that it is supported by all the necessary technology and data needed to realise its potential.

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### Better data and insights

The Data and Insight team has been set up to improve access to and the quality of data and analytical insights across the organisation. As an emerging and growing function in the national office, the team have successfully developed and rolled out a number of new reports and dashboards within its first year. Engaging with a wide range of departments, the team also developed UNISON's first ever Data Strategy, laying the foundation for future work on managing and using data more effectively and efficiently across the organisation. Looking forward, the team will

manage a new project to design, develop and implement UNISON's modern data architecture, develop new data tools and platforms to enable more sophisticated campaigns and to answer more complex questions about our membership trends and services we provide for members.

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### JCWI Immigration help-line

One membership service that has been growing in importance is our immigration advice line provided through the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI). Members can access the service by contacting UNISONdirect and it is available for any member who has an immigration related query. The helpline has provided vital advice to members on issues ranging from their work visa renewal, EU Settled Status application, right to family life issues and dealing with chronic Home Office delays processing paperwork. The helpline is an important strand within UNISON's organising, recruiting and campaigning work around migrant worker rights and gives our members vital advice as immigration rules are constantly changing and determine our members ability to live and work in this country. The provision of timely immigration advice has never been more critical – 486 of our migrant worker members were assisted by our helpline last year, the highest numbers we've had so far.

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### Organising migrant workers

A strong UNISON must be well organised in communities of migrant workers delivering public services. Migrant workers experience the same issues as other workers but also face the intersecting challenges of government legislation and policies which make them more vulnerable in the workplace and in wider UK society. To ensure expert advice, support and solidarity for UNISON migrant worker members, UNISON has renewed our funding commitment to the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) advice line, ensuring access to migrant rights advice for UNISON members and their families.

In 2023, the UNISON Strategic Organising Unit launched the UNISON Migrant Worker Network. An informal network of UNISON members with a first-generation immigrant background including overseas and migrant workers, EU settled status workers and workers who have subsequently naturalised as British citizens or who have indefinite leave to remain. Members can now update their membership record

as a migrant worker using a simple link / QR code. The network has grown steadily through 2023, although more work is needed at a regional and branch level to promote the network to migrant worker members. The network has enabled UNISON to send targeted migrant rights advice to members signed up to the network. In 2024, the network will hold online meetings to provide further support and advice on relevant issues and to identify members willing to support UNISON organising within their migrant worker communities. Further details and a leaflet to promote the network can be found here [www.unison.org.uk/news/article/2023/04/unison-launches-new-migrant-member-network/](http://www.unison.org.uk/news/article/2023/04/unison-launches-new-migrant-member-network/)

For further details and / or organising materials relating to migrant worker organising please contact the Strategic Organising Unit at [s.organisingunit@unison.co.uk](mailto:s.organisingunit@unison.co.uk)

## Race Discrimination

The UNISON Race Discrimination Inquiry Steering Group was set up at the request of the National Black Members Committee (NBMC) due to an increasing number of racial discrimination complaints from Black members within UNISON. The purpose of the Inquiry is to investigate UNISON's strategies in addressing race discrimination and promoting race equality in the workplace, evaluating their effectiveness, identifying areas for improvement, and making recommendations.

The inquiry is divided into two phases:

### Phase 1 - Data Collection:

Gathering information on race discrimination cases, regional reports on the Race Discrimination Protocol (RDP), organising framework data on branch activities challenging racism, and evaluating the current training offer.

### Phase 2 - Considering Evidence and Recommendations:

Reviewing data collected in Phase 1, obtaining oral/written evidence from Black members who have experienced race discrimination, identifying best practices in responding to race discrimination, and formulating recommendations with an implementation plan.

The Steering Group, which has met nine times since 2022, has carried out extensive work to deliver the outputs identified in Phase 1 of the Inquiry as summarised below.

### Reviewing UNISON Policies:

Examining policies, guides, and protocols related to tackling

race discrimination, including the Race Discrimination Protocol and Challenging Racism in the Workplace guide.

### Regional Reports on RDP:

Requesting and collating reports from Regional Secretaries on the operation of the Race Discrimination Protocol in regions. The reports were presented to the Inquiry Panel, and a workshop is planned for late Spring to conduct an in-depth review of recommendations from the March 2021 RDP Report and determine next steps.

### Organising Framework Data:

Analysing data on branch entries regarding challenging racism in the workplace. Of 668 respondees from Branches out of a total of 814 for 2021/22: 38 (6%) said Yes, 616 (92%) said No, 14 (2%) said Didn't know.

### Training Offer Evaluation:

Assessing the training offer for activists, branches, and members regarding challenging racism courses. Challenges such as low uptake were noted, and the following recommendations were suggested by the panel: UNISON's Organising staff to assist members in negotiating time off for training with employers and more stewards to be encouraged to attend UNISON's building confidence courses.

### Report from Thompsons Solicitors:

Thompsons Solicitors presented a comprehensive report on race discrimination cases, legal processes, case studies, and responded to questions from the Steering Group. The report included an explanation of the race discrimination claim process, application of the RDP protocol, statistical report on UNISON race protocol referrals and training delivered to UNISON.

Thompsons Solicitors have provided additional information on 20 cases that did not proceed to tribunal, citing reasons such as members deciding not to continue, withdrawing instructions, cases lacking prospects of success, and non-responsive members.

Thompsons also provided further case statistics on what number of cases passed the merits test between March 2017-March 2020 following a question from the panel.

The breakdown is as follows:

No reasonable prospects of success:	_____	422
Reasonable prospects of success:	_____	166
Member not replied/other:	_____	76
Total:	_____	664

**Evidence Sessions:**

Preparing for evidence sessions where Black members with lived experiences of racism and discrimination will share their stories with Katharine Newton KC, who was appointed as legal adviser to the Panel.

The evidence sessions were held in February / March 2024, and will inform the final recommendations of the Inquiry.

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## Using the law to fight for our members

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**Introduction**

UNISON's in-house legal team saw another busy year in 2023, continuing to bring legal challenges for our members in court and advocate for worker and trade union rights. The in-house legal team reviews the legal services scheme which provides representation and support to our members on an individual or collective basis in a number of different areas, including employment, criminal, and personal injury. Additionally, the team supports and runs large scale and groundbreaking litigation in the highest courts in the UK, as well as challenging the laws and regulations that are introduced by the UK government, which threaten individual and collective rights.

**Brazel – Legislation to overturn our Supreme Court win**

UNISON took *Harpur Trust v Brazel* and UNISON ('Brazel') all the way to the Supreme Court and 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. In response to our win, 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 outlined amendments to the law in respect of statutory holiday entitlement for term-time workers which would negate the decision of the Supreme Court in the Brazel case. UNISON vehemently opposed these changes but unfortunately the government announced they would be pursuing amendments to the law surrounding holiday pay and set out new regulations on 1 January 2024 to reverse the Brazel decision for part year and irregular

hours workers. The new regulations will come into effect from 1 April 2024.

We have been able to win in excess of £110 million in backpay settlements for members in term time only worker cases. We are continuing to pursue term time only cases in a number of areas across the UK. Approximately 200,000 members are classified as term time only and we will continue to fight for these members who are often discriminated against on the grounds of their employment status.

**The ongoing fight for equal pay**

Three historical collective equal pay matters are nearing conclusion. In Derby City Council, 139 equal value claims have been recently resolved. Initially, the Council relied on a market forces defence to justify the difference in pay. We instructed a market forces' expert to counter the Council's arguments and provide evidence to show that the pay differential between female and male workers could not be justified. A 6-week hearing was due to take place from early October 2023, however following receipt of our expert evidence, the Council agreed to settle. Settlement terms have been agreed and our members should receive their compensation by Spring 2024.

In Durham Council, 319 claims remain. They are a mixture of rated as equivalent / equal value claims. The parties remain in settlement negotiations, with a resolution hoped for in the coming months.

Historical claims against Birmingham Council have now been resolved, since 2015 we have recovered compensation of just under £89 million for members. The Branch has also identified further grounds for bringing fresh equal pay claims against the Council. These relate to the operation of discriminatory work practices, namely "Task and Finish" and potential job enrichment, both benefitting predominantly male roles. The Council have issued a section 114 notice, indicating they are in serious financial difficulties. The Council have also stated that they believe they have an equal pay liability of up to £760 million. Commissioners have now been appointed by the government. Claims for over 1,000 members have been lodged in the Tribunal with a further 1,000 claims due to be lodged in the coming weeks.

Additional equal pay claims have been identified against the former Cumbria Council; and following a re-organisation in 2023 now known as Westmoreland and Furness Council

and Cumberland Council. These relate to the Single Status job evaluation that was carried out by Cumbria Council approximately 15 years ago. Concerns have been raised regarding the criteria used to score jobs and the lack of transparency in carrying out the evaluation. Approximately 500 Tribunal claims were lodged prior to Christmas 2023.

In 2019 Glasgow City Council paid compensation of around £58 million to 4000 members after the Court of Session held that the council failed to prove that the job evaluation scheme was valid. During 2023/24, a further £42 million was paid out. These further settlements were made up of new claims and to cover the “gap period” between 2018 and the implementation of the new pay and grading system.

Equal pay claims in Aberdeenshire Council, Edinburgh City Council and East Ayrshire Council have also been settled and there are live equal pay claims in Argyll and Bute Council and Dundee City Council.

At a preliminary hearing of equal pay claims brought against Fife Council, the Employment Tribunal found that the JES at Fife Council was unreliable. 150 claims have now been lodged by UNISON members against Fife Council. The council have appointed an independent expert to carry out a further job evaluation. The Region and Branch intend to scrutinise that process and seek to negotiate an interim settlement of these claims.

Further, equal pay claims are currently under investigation in a number of local authorities by branches and regions.

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### **Protecting members maternity rights**

UNISON Legal services are also currently running several employment tribunals claims for members who are term time only teaching assistants. UNISON is arguing that these members were paid an incorrect amount of holiday pay during their maternity leave and as a result have been discriminated against and that these calculations should now be revised. Their final hearings are due to take place in the coming months.

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### **Windrush Judicial review**

In December 2023, UNISON was granted permission to intervene in a challenge to the Home Secretary’s decision to renege on her commitment to implement three key recommendations made by Wendy Williams in her review “Lessons Learned” into the Windrush scandal and the hostile environment.

A key recommendation was to appoint a migrants’ commissioner, who would be responsible for speaking up for migrants and work with the government to identify and address any systemic concerns. Wendy Williams also recommended that reconciliation events be held to give members of the Windrush generation the opportunity to share the impact on them and their families with senior Home Office officials. Lastly, she recommended that the role and remit of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration be reviewed, and consideration given to the ICIBI being granted more powers to publish reports.

If successful, the Home Secretary is likely to have to reconsider whether to implement Wendy Williams’ recommendations in full. The claim is due to be heard on 23 and 24 April 2024. More information is available earlier in this report under the Migrant worker section.

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### **Mercer update – Awaiting Supreme Court Decision**

Following a problematic Court of Appeal decision handed down in March 2022, in November 2022, UNISON was successfully granted the right to appeal UNISON member, Fiona Mercer’s case to the Supreme Court. The hearing took place on 12 and 13 December 2023 and focused on how Fiona, a UNISON workplace representative who was suspended from work due to participation in industrial action, was treated. UK law does not currently provide an express right to protect workers from suspension due to industrial action, but UNISON argued that it should, and that UK legislation was not compatible with a worker’s article 11 right of freedom of assembly. UNISON is now awaiting a decision from the Supreme Court. If successful, this UNISON-led appeal will potentially expand the protections provided to striking workers so that along with protection from dismissal, they cannot suffer from unfair detriment for taking part in strike action.



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## Success at the UK Supreme Court

### Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland v Agnew and others (UNISON Intervening), UK Supreme Court judgment

UNISON intervened and successfully led arguments in this case at a hearing at the UK Supreme Court on 14-15 December 2022. The UK Supreme Court handed down its judgment on 4 October 2023 that workers were entitled to back pay for underpaid annual leave which could not previously be recovered when there were gaps of more than three months in a relevant 'series' of underpaid holiday pay. This addresses situations which typically arise when members take paid annual leave in temporal clusters (e.g. Christmas and then Easter – where there is a gap of over 3 months). This judgment overturned the flawed Employment Appeal Tribunal's 2015 judgment in *Bear Scotland and others v Fulton and others*.

Thanks to UNISON, workers can challenge ongoing, linked underpayments in their wages, even if there is a gap of three months or more between the underpayments. In Great Britain, due to a change in law by the Conservative Government, back pay is limited to two years, however, it is unlimited in Northern Ireland, where UNISON is currently pursuing similar claims on behalf of members.

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## Legal Advice and Representation

### Employment law representation and advice for members

UNISON is currently pursuing employment tribunal claims on behalf of 6,300 members – this includes individual and group claims. These include single and collective claims on behalf of members.

Between 1 January to 31 December 2023, 210 UNISON Employment Tribunal cases were successfully concluded in England and Wales. Of those cases, 192 were settled and 18 were won at a contested tribunal hearing. UNISON members recovered a total of over £3 million compensation during this period.

This year, UNISON successfully ran 130 discrimination cases, covering a wide range of protected characteristics including race (60), disability (54), sex (13) sexual orientation (1), age (1) and religious belief (1). UNISON members recovered over £1.6 million in compensation for discrimination claims.

UNISON's members challenged mass equal pay claims, and collective claims for unpaid holiday pay (term time cases) and these are mentioned above.

### Legal assistance personal Injuries and accidents at work for members and their families

Aside from the very comprehensive legal assistance members are given with employment law issues, another big benefit of our legal support is the UNISON personal injury legal scheme. Please see the Personal Injury Settlement section for further details. In 2023, we supported around 4,000 members and their family members with legal advice where they had suffered an accident, injury or illness. During this period, we successfully concluded over 2,300 personal injury cases, ensuring our members and their family members received the justice and compensation they deserved. In 2023, this compensation amounted to a very substantial sum - £53 million, showing a significant increase from the previous year.

Additionally, the personal injury part of the legal scheme also covers initial legal advice in cases involving clinical negligence. If the case is one that our lawyers advise should proceed, then preferential private rates are offered to our members and their family members. In 2023 this led to them securing over £150,000.

### Criminal law services for members

The legal scheme also covers criminal law matters for our members. In 2023 UNISON assisted 495 members under our criminal law advice and assistance scheme. This service is designed to support UNISON members who are in the harrowing position of defending work-related criminal allegations.

### Free Legal Advice

This year, many members have continued to use the other valuable parts of the UNISON legal services on offer too. The legal scheme helped almost 5,000 members through our free initial legal advice scheme which offers assistance with non work-related issues.

### Wills and Conveyancing

We also assisted 3,130 (2653 wills, 477 conveyancing) members/family members under our wills and conveyancing service. This took the form of either free standard wills,

or discounted more complex wills, probate services and conveyancing services for our members and their families.

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## Personal injury settlements

The UNISON legal services scheme provides legal advice and representation to members who have suffered work related personal injuries, as a result of their employers' negligence. This includes injuries arising from assaults at work, stress at work and asbestos claims, as well as manual handling, trips, falls and needlestick injuries.

The legal support our members receive through the scheme is crucial as it enables them to obtain damages for their pain and suffering as well as for their financial losses. Bringing the case against their employer also holds their employer to account. Additionally, we know from previous surveys that in over 60% of cases our members said their workplace changed for the better after they had brought the claim.

### Assaults at work

We have continued to secure compensation for many members who were victims of assault during their employment, with them receiving considerable settlements through the scheme. Across the UK in 2023, the UNISON personal injury scheme supported 615 members with legal advice, who were assaulted at work and suffered injury; and we settled hundreds of these cases leading to over £2 million in damages, with 3 members receiving over £100,000 this year. One member in particular was assaulted by an agitated service user, causing our member both physical and psychological injuries. Thankfully, with our support their employer admitted they were at fault and we were able to negotiate a settlement of over £80,000. The fact that such claims are successful and damages recovered can also really help health and safety representatives in the workplace prevent similar incidents in the future.

### Serious work-related diseases

Under the scheme we offer very specialist, expert, legal assistance, this enables UNISON to obtain awards for our members suffering from serious work-related diseases. We have continued to press for awards in the very difficult legal area of work-related stress claims. Despite the legal challenges with these types of claims, UNISON assisted

148 members who came to us for advice about their stress claims. We are running a number of cases with an estimated value of just under £500,000; and in 2023 we succeeded in securing over £300,000 for our members who suffered injury as a result of stress and or bullying/harassment at work, with one recent case in Scotland achieving £165,000 in damages for our member. Cases such as this show the value of our legal scheme, as well as evidence of the union's preparedness to take cases that claim companies and no win/no fee solicitors will often not.

The UNISON personal injury scheme further provides crucial assistance to deceased members' families in tragic fatal cases. In a fatal case where our member suffered mesothelioma, a terrible disease, we were able to recover over £380,000 for the family. In 2023, we managed to settle four cases involving mesothelioma leading to recovery of over £1 million.

Pursuing all these workplace claims not only assists those individual members to obtain justice, but also promotes very important wider benefits, such as safer working conditions for all public sector workers.

### Road traffic accidents

The scheme is also extremely wide, it extends to supporting members and their families with their non-work related injury claims – such as road traffic accident (RTA) cases. We have helped many members/family members who have suffered such accidents in 2023, including assisting members who find themselves in very tragic circumstances. For example, our member's partner was involved in a serious RTA which caused significant injuries and they then sadly passed away. Despite the insurers initial reluctance to put forward reasonable offers, the union's support eventually led to a settlement of over £280,000 for our member.

### Total awards for members

In total within the UK in 2023, UNISON assisted both its members and members' families by settling around 2,300 cases and secured just over £53 million for them following their personal injury.

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## Industrial Action Ballot Summary

2023 continues to exceed records for the number of industrial ballots held in UNISON with almost 415,000

ballot papers sent to members across almost 90 separate disputes last year. Major national disputes and ballots were held across Local Government in England, schools in Scotland, Higher Education and almost all Health and Local Government members in Northern Ireland have been involved in industrial action during the campaigns for pay and grading, and HSC pay.

The end of 2023 saw disputes in the Pay Fair campaign develop into industrial ballots – including in Warrington and Halton, Wirral, Mid Cheshire, North and South Tees and Bedfordshire to name but a few.

Ballots have been conducted in every region and nation in the UK and Northern Ireland, with 75 branches involved in local ballots in the past year in every service group.

As a union we continue to improve organising outcomes during ballots and turning out members to ensure that we meet the Government's 50% threshold in more and more disputes. Over 50 single-employer ballots made the turnout threshold in 2023, compared to just 19 which did not, with turnout now averaging 60% in all UNISON ballots.

2023 has also seen the introduction of pernicious legislation designed to undermine workers' rights in the form of Minimum Service Levels and work notices. While fighting this legislation and its' chilling effect on our rights, UNISON has prepared guidance in case it is used in our sectors and is getting ready for the chaos which would be created if employers try to impose these restrictions on our freedoms.

The Member Liaison Unit which coordinates and administers industrial ballots across the union remains committed to working with our sectors and service groups to ensure we can secure the best outcomes for our members through industrial action, and continues to work with the NEC Industrial Action Committee to produce and update guidance to ensure that members are properly supported during the difficult process of balloting and taking strike action.

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## UNISONdirect 2023

UNISONdirect, UNISON's member contact centre, saw another record-breaking year for member enquiries in 2023. The Stevenage-based call centre received 344,992

contacts across the year, a four per cent increase on the previous year. This included a record of almost 100,000 queries received online - up 23 per cent from 2022.

13,432 members chose to speak live to an agent via webchat – which is an increasingly popular choice for many members who prefer the ease of chatting online with one of the team without the need to call or email. UNISONdirect's webchat - found on the UNISON website – connects members directly with a real agent and does not use AI or 'chatbot' automation to answer queries.

As well as opening up new ways to contact UNISONdirect, satisfaction surveys show that 85 per cent of members who contacted us by phone are happy or very happy with the service they received. One member told the survey: "I was very grateful for the support I have had in applying for the payments towards the gas and electric. I am dyslexic. I am very grateful for the patience of the person on the phone who helped me to fill in the form otherwise I wouldn't have been able to apply. Thank you so much." Another told us: "I am unable to use the website due to a sight issue. To be able to speak to an agent who was wonderful, and I am so pleased ...The clarity of the answers and the wait time answering of the call, absolute everything was beyond any expectation. It was all wonderful".

These exceptional outcomes follow UNISON's acquisition of UNISONdirect in 2022 after its previous owner – insurance firm UIA – was unable to remain in business.

The UNISON team that oversaw the takeover of the operational infrastructure ensured that there was no down time while all services were split, a new telephony system was installed, and the contact centre moved to a new office in Stevenage.

During this period of change, agents worked from home for three months while infrastructure changes took place. We are enormously proud that throughout this time there was no gap in the service provided to members.

In 2023, UNISONdirect triaged and completed 92 per cent of all queries without needing to refer the member to the branch. Branch referrals accounted for just 8 per cent (27,462) of our contacts.

Of the types of calls we received this year, UNISONdirect received 26,080 enquiries about members' workplace

contracts, which is an increase of 3 per cent from 2022. There were 12,739 calls for information on sickness pay and absence, up 16 per cent from 2022. Meanwhile, almost 6,000 members were put in touch with Thompsons Solicitors to access free legal advice.

## There for You

UNISON's charity, There for You, supports UNISON members and their families in times of unexpected financial hardship. 2023 saw the ongoing effects of the cost-of-living crisis. Rising living costs meant that many members were forced to change their spending, cutting back wherever they could while others had to rely on increased borrowing just to make ends meet.

During 2023, we spent £835,809 helping 3,838 members: providing financial help to those who needed it most. This reflects the impact that both the increase in energy and housing costs has had, as well as general inflation. Once again, our programme of grants became a critical means of support for many of our most vulnerable members. However, none of this would have been possible without the additional financial support and donations from UNISON, and the generosity of branches, regions, and individual members.

### Grant type summary \_\_\_\_\_ £

Crisis payments (member has no money for food or fuel) _____	£2,200
Covid 19 Response Fund _____	£10,410
Energy Support Grants _____	£298,190
Special payments including hospital travel, car repairs _____	£12,776
Help with essential living costs _____	£133,010
Housing costs _____	£19,852
Household items – white goods and furniture_	£59,332
Disability, health, medical, wellbeing _____	£5,355
Household maintenance and services _____	£7,707
Clothing _____	£2,020
Priority debt including rent, mortgage, council tax, debt relief and bankruptcy _____	£53,577
School uniform grants _____	£63,500
Winter fuel grants _____	£144,800
Funeral costs _____	£17,839
Buy A Gift _____	£5,241
TOTAL _____	£835,809

### Member feedback:

*“Thank you! Such a great help and relief. I am very grateful for Unison’s help and support - it’s made a huge difference to my mental health to feel less alone.”*

*“Thank you so much for sorting this out for me. It’ll be a massive help to my family. I know it’s silly but the bit about the day trip had me in tears.”*

*“I just wanted to email you to thank you so very much for this money, I’m speechless at the incredible generosity shown and your kindness and support. This will make the next few months a little easier and have a huge positive impact on my mental health.”*

*“I would once again want to express my heartfelt gratitude to you as an individual and to UNISON, There for You. There couldn’t have been a better name for the Association/Organisation. You indeed have been there for me in times of need.”*

*“Thank you so much for your assistance. I now appreciate the importance of being part of UNISON even more than before. That one-off assistance that one may require during a time of desperation is mostly appreciated. Please continue doing this noble thing.”*

*“Thank you very much for the rescue at this crucial moment. I really appreciate as I was beginning to feel like I was drowning. Oh, I honestly cannot explain the feeling of relief. Nothing will ever be small for us. This gesture is really appreciated.”*

*“I’m here to thank UNISON There for You for their immense support so far. I wouldn’t have made it this far if not for UNISON. I joined UNISON not knowing that I would have been a victim of circumstances, but now I think I took a great initiative joining UNISON.”*

*“I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for your assistance. I don’t know what I would have done if you had not intervened. I’m really grateful.”*

*I’m at loss for words and even crying now. Thank you so much for your help and kindness. I greatly appreciate this as this will get me out of debt.”*

*“I could not thank you enough for considering my application. It’s been tough for the last couple of weeks, and it had me broke down for a minute or two. Thank you.”*

*“Wow, that’s amazing, thank you so much! Honestly, that’s an absolute God send at the moment. I haven’t got enough words of gratitude. Thank you”.*

*“The last few months have been awful for myself, and my family and your kindness has made a huge difference. It is incredibly reassuring to us that we are able to top up the meters and fill up the fridge, and we couldn’t have done this without you. Thank you so much again.”*

*“Words cannot express my sincere appreciation to you and your team for approving this financial assistance. Because of all your help, I will be able to pay my house rent and pay some of my bills during this difficult time. I hope one day I can return the favor to all of you. God bless you and your family. Again, Thank you so much.*

*“Please may I offer you a huge heartfelt THANK YOU. I emailed at my lowest point in my life feeling I was begging for money, both yourself and your team are the most caring, compassionate and nonjudgemental service and people I have ever had the pleasure in having to talk and communicate with. The grant I received is more than I ever imagined it would be, my family will GREATLY appreciate all your help and advice all of which I’m taking and accepting of now, thank you for everything.”*

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

## UNISON College

UNISON College provides training for activists and learning opportunities for all members across the union – to develop confidence in skills that can be transferrable personally and professionally. UNISON College includes:

- Learning for our members – personal skills, continuing professional development.
  - Training for our activists – mandatory reps training, activist development, leadership
  - Supporting learning – careers information, advice and guidance; financial support including bursaries, grants and discounts; access to learning and additional support
- For further information on the full range of new courses and opportunities for activists and members <https://learning.unison.org.uk/>

## Activist training

2023 saw an increase in the numbers of activists attending the initial mandatory training for all 3 core representatives roles compared to the last 3 years.

In addition to the core training listed below, over 3,000 activists attended advanced or development training sessions.

Last year introduced the requirement for all reps to complete mandatory equality training within 2 years of completing the initial training and further training for reps and branch officers who undertake bargaining and negotiations. 2024 will build on this to ensure that there are effective systems to ensure that all reps undertake the relevant training.

Activist training continues to be updated and developed in line with Organising to Win and the priorities of the union. Training on supporting reps’ wellbeing, an introduction to artificial intelligence and also green skills were new course areas introduced last year to equip our activists in supporting our members.

### Activist Training Course \_\_\_\_\_ Reps Attending in 2023

New Organising Stewards \_\_\_\_\_ 1,648  
(Stage 1 and Stage 2 training to reach ERA accreditation)

Health and Safety reps (initial training) \_\_\_\_\_ 378

Union Learning Representatives (initial training) \_\_\_\_\_ 62

Equality training \_\_\_\_\_ 155  
(for all reps within 2 years of completing induction training)

ERA Refresher training \_\_\_\_\_ 719  
(for stewards to complete every 5 years)

Follow-on Courses \_\_\_\_\_ 401

The most popular being: Introduction to Employment Law, Representing Members, Equality in the Branch, Grievances and Disciplinarys, Dealing with Capability cases

Challenging Racism in the Workplace training \_\_\_\_\_ 72  
(for reps and branch officers who undertake representation and negotiation)

UNISON’s e-learning \_\_\_\_\_ 3692  
(GDPR, mapping and other online modules)

## Member learning

3,943 members attended a formal workshop or course. These included sessions delivered by UNISON and our partners such as The Open University, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), Cruse Bereavement Support, and many other national and local providers. In addition, shorter and informal member learning events were organised by branches or regions; and a further 687 members attended short informal webinars and workshops delivered by LAOS national.

Through the UNISON College, members have access to the Skills Academy e-learning platform and a total of 1,898 members registered on a course in 2023.

UNISON College co-ordinated learning events during Learning at Work Week in May and organised an additional member learning week in October and a financial wellbeing week in November to highlight UNISON's learning offer and link in with the union's organising and campaigning work.

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## UNISON Living

UNISON's group of endorsed Affinity Partners selected with due diligence and a strict procurement process to bring added value to UNISON membership and valued resources to support our membership recruitment and retention objectives.

Our UNISON Living Partner contracts, relations and activity programme are actively monitored via scheduled joint meetings with each partner throughout the year.

The Partners have continued to commit resources through an Annual Marketing Plan to support National, Regional and Branch activity to reach out to members to raise awareness and engagement.

The Partner management information reports indicate an overall steady upward trend in take up of their offerings throughout 2023 paving the way for engagement and growth going forward.

The Partners have participated in Regional Branch Webinars and Events throughout 2023.

The Partners Annual Market Plans include resources to

promote and raise awareness of their offerings through UNISON's communication channels.

Our UNISON Living Partners sponsorship of the Conference Delegate Bag continues to raise much needed funds for UNISON Welfare 'There for You' charity with further contributions from individual Partners to support UNISON's 'There for You' Fund.

Our Partners were present at UNISON's National Conferences throughout 2023 staging an active and lively in person Exhibition.

The UNISON Living NDC free prize draw and ice cream promotion making a return in 2023 was very much appreciated by our NDC delegates who further boosted the Welfare funds in exchange for an 'ice cream'!

The challenges posed by the ongoing 'cost of living' climate continue to be front of mind and UNISON Living was a key component in the LAOS Team's 'Financial Wellbeing' Webinar week Programme.

All Partner Contracts, Agreements and relations, including UNISON Travel, Vauxhall Partners Programme and Vision Express are the subject of ongoing joint monitoring and as informed by member feedback.

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## Quilter Financial and Mortgage Advisors

QFA saw an 8% increase in members who took advantage of their free initial financial consultation in 2023 compared with 2022 and a 36% increase in members who transacted business with us in 2023. The financial education events are still very popular with members, with the Cost of Living presentation being one of the most popular. A number of our events are still being delivered online post covid, which provides us with a greater reach of members to engage with.

QFA rebranded in October 2023 to QFA, from 'Lighthouse Financial and Mortgage Advice' – the rebrand has had no negative impact on member engagement.

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## Shepherds Friendly

Activity and engagement with members, branches and regions:

- Attended multiple events throughout the year including the National, Local Government, Health, Women's, Retired Members, and Police and Justice conferences;
- Engaged with members through a solus email towards the end of the year which saw great engagement rates and our highest ever sales, in a given month, through this partnership;
- Annual marketing plan communications.

### National

- Attended multiple conferences, seminars and events throughout the year
- Featured in the activist magazine
- Inserts in new member packs
- Direct contact with members through a solus email

### Regional

- Attended key regional events such as Northwest/GLR/ Wales regional councils, GLR health training, Anglia branch event and Eastern Summer school.
- Webinars – GLR, South East and Northern Ireland Retired member forum.
- Monthly bulletin feature for GLR, plus features in several other regional/sectoral/branch mailings.

### Branch

- Gained permission to add inserts into AGM packs from several branches
- Attended multiple AGMs and presented our products

### Direct

- Post conference follow up emails were sent to those who opted-in
- Quarterly branch literature order communication to our grown database
- Limited time offers of an enhanced incentive, coinciding with key UNISON events and circulated to regional and branch level contacts

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### Partner trends (in terms of product take up/growth)

When compared to 2022, in 2023 we saw a 9.9% decrease in sales due to the discontinuation of UMag. However, luckily we were able to pick sales up towards the end of the year with the solus email send in December

2023, which alone brought in 375 members, the largest sales push we've seen from a single piece of activity with UNISON.

### Any new products/initiatives during 2023

- No new products were introduced; however, we did sunset five products, our Young Save Plan, Junior Money Maker, Bonus Plan, Sustainable Stocks and Shares ISA and Sustainable Junior ISA in an attempt to consolidate our product offering, and allow us to focus on innovating and making improvements to our existing products.
- We replaced the Love2Shop voucher offer on our ISA products with an ISA Boost incentive. With this we now pay up to £105 cashback directly into a member's Stocks and Shares ISA or Junior ISA when they take out a plan with us and pay their first premium.

### Planned activity / resources to capture potential growth /density

- Inclusion in UMag 2024
- Four solus emails booked to promote our investment products with the UNISON membership
- Inclusion of inserts in the Activist magazine
- Inclusion of inserts in New Member Packs
- Improvements to our products, which includes the launch of a new app soon, so members can manage their investments easily on their devices

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### Challenges post covid period

- The cost of living crisis that arose following on from Covid has impacted the uptake of investment products, in terms of numbers and the amount invested.
- 2024 is showing signs of members recovering from that

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### UNISON Protect, Prepaid Plus Cashback Card and UNISON Rewards

#### Affinity partner activity/engagement with members, Branches and Regions

Throughout 2023, UIB have supported Local Organisers and Regional Officers at worksite events at Local Government Health and Education worksites. We have attended regional councils, policy weekends, UNISON Living regional meetings, presented at online regional/

branch seminars to members and sponsored regional awards. In the first quarter of 2023 we attended many branch AGMs, whether face to face or online (according to what was needed).

We attended the National, Health and Women’s conferences, as well as smaller SOG conferences as per the UNISON Living team agenda.

We continued to support branches and regions with a regular supply of product materials for them to promote to their members.

#### Annual marketing plan communications

- Insert Rewards leaflets into new member packs.
- Insert Free £5,000 insurance leaflets into new member packs.
- Attend UNISON conferences.
- Regional team support branches and regions.

#### Partner stats., in terms of product take up/growth

- 43,855 Free £5,000 insurance policies were issued in 2023.
- UNISON’s commission from UIB, increased 9% against 2022.
- With budgets still tight and members looking for ways to get the most out of their money, UI saw a 24% increase in Prepaid cards and a 65% increase in take-up of the Free Rewards programme versus 2022.

#### Any new products/initiatives during 2023

- UIB launched a Vulnerable Customer Forum in August. The team meets once a month and the goal is to ensure that appropriate treatment of customers with characteristics of vulnerability is embedded and enacted throughout UIB.
- UIB successfully achieved their bronze IIE environmental accreditation and are currently working towards silver.

#### Planned activity/resources to capture potential growth/density

- Throughout 2024, the team will be working on improvements to the Rewards journey and the discounts offered to members.
- Relaunch Income Protection.

#### Case studies/anecdotal accounts of member value/satisfaction

When a customer claims on one of our policies, we try to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy by minimising the need for paperwork and instead phone the member to keep them informed of the status of their claim and to check on the progress of their recovery. Here’s some feedback we received from UNISON members on the service they received:

A sixty-four-year-old UNISON member and teaching assistant was medically retired following a stroke.

She has had an Income Protection policy with UIB since 2009 and has successfully claimed on the policy. She has been paid £7,299.99 to date.

Her recent feedback to Natashia in our claims team was that she has been very satisfied with the service she has been provided, she looks forward to our monthly calls and the benefit has allowed her to relax and not worry.

A UNISON member with a UIB over 50s accident cover policy informed us that she was in financial difficulty, struggling with money for petrol to get to the hospital and for her electric meter. Once we had gathered all of the information required to accept the claim, we were able to agree a faster payment to ensure she would get her payment as quickly as possible. We received the following message back from her: “Omg thank you so much, it means I can split it into 4 months covering me while I get back to work. You are heroes”.

Another UNISON member with a UIB over 50s accident cover policy, who slipped on a wet pavement and fractured her right arm, just sent us the following email:

“I have received the money and would like to thank you for your professional service. I was pleasantly surprised about the ease with which this claim has been processed. Everything in modern life seems so difficult so I was prepared for this to be so too!

It has been a difficult time for me with my injury and I was not able to get sick pay from my employer, so I am very grateful. I am very glad to have this policy.”



**Customer survey** – when asked “How satisfied were you with the service we provided to you?” – 98.8% responded positively.

**Customer survey** – when asked “How likely is it that you would recommend us to a friend or colleague?” – 96.6% responded positively.

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### Challenges post covid period

No challenges post covid. UIB implemented a payment break for customers during covid and have continued to offer this to customers who may be temporarily struggling to pay their insurance, but want to keep their policy.

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### UNISON Dental and Health Plans – Insight

Pleased to report the overall positive effect of our relationship continues with a slight amount of growth in UNISON members with a plan during 2023 albeit we were without the usual high level of marketing activity due to the *U magazine* print edition suspension. Great news that there’s been developments in this area recently.

Over the past twelve months we have endeavoured to support UNISON when and wherever possible by attending all of the larger National Conferences and where it hasn’t been possible, we have supplied comms materials. For the first time since the pandemic, we have attended both the National Black Workers and Higher Education Conferences. In face-to-face situations feedback from members is always positive and un-prompted particularly for the UNISON NHS Dental Plan. Members are keen to tell colleagues of positive experiences.

Regionally, we have attended both physically and remotely Regional Councils and Membership Services Meetings. Our aim is to try to attend at least one Regional Council meeting per year in all Regions. We continue to support Branches by telephone, e-mail and supply of literature where requested and communicate regularly as possible.

One notable event that we both sponsored and attended in November last year was the West Midlands Region Awards at the Burlington Hotel in Central Birmingham and if possible, we will attend the South West “Get Active” event and awards in May.

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### NHS dental news and insight

‘It may not be a silver bullet but, in the last couple of weeks, the government has introduced some new initiatives and put in extra funding and special incentives to make sure dentists are now taking on more new NHS patients as part of what they have called the ‘NHS Dental Recovery Plan’.

This includes £200m extra funding to treat new patients and to focus on under-served areas. Since early 2022, the NHS has already required dentists to operate at 85% of their pre-pandemic activity. There are still heart-rendering stories in the media, but dentistry is more-or-less back to pre-pandemic levels.

The areas that struggle the most have typically always struggled and to address this further, the £200m extra funding is there to attract new NHS dentists and improve access to care in areas with the highest demand versus a lack of availability, the government claims that around 240 dentists are to be offered “Golden Hello” payments of up to £20,000 to work in these under-served areas for up to 3 years. New ways of delivering care in rural and coastal areas are also being rolled out including ‘dental vans’ to reach isolated communities.

None of the above is perfect (nor is it even enough) and we’d like to see far more deeds and less words in this vital area.’

The first port of call for signposting members to the Partner offerings continues to be the [benefits.unison.org.uk](https://benefits.unison.org.uk) site with links to all the Partners microsites to ensure access to accurate and compliant information at all times.

There is an ongoing commitment to review and explore the market for new partners and offerings to grow the package of ‘add on’ benefits to bring added value to UNISON membership; the focus and a key aim is to include ‘lifestyle’ and ‘wellbeing’ offerings in addition to our essential services and products, insurance, finance, health products currently offered by our trusted and valued core Providers.

The NEC Services to Members Committee and UNISON Living Partners Annual Seminar will take place in May to review the UNISON Living package, objectives and work programme priorities.

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## LV

2023 proved a challenging year for the General Insurance market overall, impacted by a number of key weather events, claims inflation and delays in sourcing replacement parts. Overall, insurance costs increased throughout 2023, reflected by the confused.com pricing index which showed at the end of Q4 2023 drivers on average, could expect to pay £995 for their annual car insurance policy. Despite these challenges, our focus remained on providing award winning discounted Car and Road Rescue insurance products to members of UNISON. LV= has been named Which? Recommended Provider for Car Insurance for the 10th year in a row and the 14th time in total. In December 2023, we were also delighted to be appointed as the endorsed provider for Home, Travel and Pet Insurance products and it's encouraging to see members taking the opportunity to contact us for a quote. Overall quote volumes during 2023 increased 54% YOY.

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## National Marketing

We continue to support national publications inc. UNISON "U" Digital and Activists magazine together with other national distribution opportunities inc. flyer inserts into new member packs. We remain focused on working closely with the 12 regions, supporting both key regional and branch event activity. We will also continue to attend and promote the rollout of the UNISONLiving member benefits webinars available to all regions, enabling both regional UNISON MSP and branch representatives to keep up to-date with the very latest news of all member benefits available via UNISONLiving.

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## Performance

Whilst we saw a higher volume of quotes during 2023, the scheme did not achieve growth however, with the introduction of home insurance in December 2023, we expect to see the scheme to return to growth over the coming 12 months.

LV= Britannia rescue breakdown cover (available as a standalone product or as an add-on to existing motor insurance customers) remains steady with only small decline in policies in force for the standalone product throughout 2023.

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## Case Studies

Our Green Heart support is all about showing our customers we care when they are feeling vulnerable, going through extraordinary or unusual life events and need our support the most. It also gives you, our amazing people, the power to put a smile on someone's face and may be even make their day!

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### The Luton Airport Car Park Fire

Representatives from the LV= Claims team were on-site to provide on-going assistance to affected LV= policyholders. As part of our support, we guaranteed our customers will get home and be equipped with transport in the short-term while arrangements were made to quickly settle their claim, waived policy excesses and promised customer's their no claims bonus would not be impacted.

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## Sponsorship

In addition, we continued to co-sponsor the UNISON National Conference delegate bags, raising vital funds to support UNISON Welfare. We were also delighted to support numerous national regional sponsorship opportunities throughout the year including the UNISONLiving exhibitor prize draw promotion at National Delegate conference.

Through our sponsorship of the Our England Test Match, our cricket tickets prize draw competition proved popular at both UNISON Health and National Conferences. In addition, through our partnership with the ECB we continued to support cricket at a grassroots level, with a £1M fund providing support across the cricket community with a focus helping women and girls, ethnically diverse groups, individuals with a disability and those facing financial hardship, this fund has supported cricket clubs across the country.

At LV= we help our customers to look after what they love in life, and we know the importance of providing support to our customers when they need us most – whether that's getting them back on the road, secure in their home or returned safely from a trip abroad.

But we want to do even more to support our customers and communities through difficult times, helping families to work

through the problems of today and putting our heart into building better lives.

So, we're proud to partner with Family Action who have been building stronger families since 1869, and today work with over 60,000 families through over 160 community-based services. Our 2023 Christmas Toy appeal collected 1500 toys and gifts for children.

We are located in the North Devon Area of Natural Beauty (AONB) so environmental concerns are paramount. Use of plastic on site has been virtually eliminated, and all waste is zero to landfill through our 3rd party supplier. We provide litter pickers and encourage beachgoers to remove plastic from the beach. UNISON's Property team have yet again successfully resisted successive planning applications unsympathetic to the area.

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### **UNISON Croyde Bay Holiday Resort**

After 30 years as General Manager of UNISON Croyde Bay, Steve Willis retired in June 2023. The NEC wish him all the best in his retirement and his success should be celebrated. Croyde Bay operates at a surplus each year, generating around £2 million in revenue, and returning a 5-7% profit margin. This enables us to pursue renovation projects during the winter months, so that we maintain the excellent standards that our guests have come to expect when visiting us.

This winter has seen us complete 12 cottage bathroom upgrades, and the new inclusive toilets in our conference suite. We have had to replace our swimming pool boiler after 40 years, and we now have a modern energy efficient one which is good as we have seen a 32% increase in energy prices!

We also pay the real living wage, or above which is an attractive offer to the local job-seeking population. This does mean that we make less profit over the financial year, but our colleagues are fairly paid for the work that they do.

The 2023 season saw the cost-of-living crisis lead to families really focusing on budgeting. Coupled with poor weather in August, this brought our sales down 5% compared with 2022, however we performed much better than the regional drop of around 26% in tourism in the South-West.

Our resort is not exclusive to UNISON members, but takes booking from the general public too. This enables us to offer UNISON members a 20% discount.

We also offer holidays at 50% discount to low-paid members, based on UNISON There for You's income criteria, and a £99 per night bed and breakfast offer for a family of 4.

## Professional Services Unit

UNISON's Professional Services Unit (PSU) represents members who are reported to their professional regulator.

We currently represent members who are registered with the following UK-wide regulatory bodies:

- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)
- Education Workforce Council (Wales) (EWC)
- General Dental Council (GDC)
- General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC)
- Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)
- Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC)
- Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)
- Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)
- Social Care Wales (SCW)
- Social Work England (SWE)

PSU also represent members who have a DBS or DS case running concurrently with their regulatory body case:

- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)
- Disclosure Scotland (DS)

There are currently 717 live cases in PSU. Cases that come into the unit can run for many years. Currently, there are live cases that were received as long ago as 2014. It is anticipated that cases will increase and continue to do so as more occupations are brought within the ambit of regulators.

**TABLE 1 - TOTAL CASES BY YEAR**

YEAR	2021	2022	2023	*2024
TOTAL CASES RECEIVED	416	362	409	104

\* 1/1/2024 – 17/3/2024 only

Below shows a breakdown of the number of cases that were received in PSU by year since 2021 (Table 1), region (Table 2) and regulatory body (Table 3).

**TABLE 2 - TOTAL CASES BY REGION**

REGION	2021	2022	2023	*2024
EASTERN	27	29	27	5
EAST MIDLANDS	21	28	23	5
GREATER LONDON	30	22	25	8
MIP	1	4	7	1
NORTHERN	25	16	10	6
NORTHERN IRELAND	15	11	13	4
NORTH WEST	47	49	53	10
SCOTLAND	97	75	119	32
SOUTH EAST	42	31	25	2
SOUTH WEST	25	16	18	10
WALES/CYMRU	28	27	21	7
WEST MIDLANDS	12	23	27	5
YORKS AND HUMBERSIDE	46	31	41	9

\* 1/1/2024 – 17/3/2024 only

**TABLE 3 - TOTAL CASES BY REGULATORY BODY**

REGULATORY BODY	2021	2022	2023	*2024
DBS	6	13	18	4
DS	2	0	0	0
EWC	4	3	1	4
GDC	0	0	2	0
GPHC	2	2	2	0
HCPC	86	69	79	23
NISCC	0	1	2	3
NMC	177	166	189	41
SCW	11	6	9	2
SSSC	66	44	74	19
SWE	62	58	33	8

\* 1/1/2024 – 17/3/2024 only

## Appendix 1

### UNISON membership figures – 2023

LINE COUNT FIGURES BY REGION FOR 2023 (FULL MEMBERS)	
MEMBERSHIP BY REGION	2023 FULL MEMBERS
EASTERN	83,000
EAST MIDLANDS	80,250
GREATER LONDON	118,000
NORTHERN	71,750
NORTHERN IRELAND	48,750
NORTH WEST	180,250
SCOTLAND	162,250
SOUTH EAST	98,250
SOUTH WEST	77,500
WALES	84,500
WEST MIDLANDS	106,500
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE	124,250

The above figures do not include retired members

## Appendix 2

### 2023 National Delegate Conference – information on delegates

The Delegate Monitoring Survey identified the following levels of participation at last year's conference:

These figures come from the fair rep information.

We had 444 responses from 1265 delegates, a response rate of 35%.

FAIR REP BREAKDOWN	PERCENTAGE (%)
FEMALE	69.10%
PART-TIME WORKERS	25.80%
BLACK MEMBERS	14.20%
DISABLED MEMBERS	34.10%
YOUNG MEMBERS (UNDER 27)	2.00%

SERVICE GROUP BREAKDOWN	PERCENTAGE (%)
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	56.10%
WATER, ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT	3.90%
HEALTH CARE	25.20%
ENERGY	3.00%
POLICE AND JUSTICE	4.10%
COMMUNITY	3.00%
HIGHER EDUCATION	4.80%

SUBSCRIPTION BAND	PERCENTAGE (%)
A UP TO 2,000	3.00%
B 2,001 – 5,000	2.10%
C 5,001 – 8,000	0.70%
D 8,001 – 11,000	1.60%
E 11,001 – 14,000	4.60%
F 14,001 – 17,000	3.60%
G 17,001 – 20,000	7.30%
H 20,001 – 25,000	18.50%
I 25,001 – 30,000	17.50%
J 30,001 – 35,000	17.30%
K OVER 35,000	23.70%
MEMBER IN EDUCATION / APPRENTICESHIP OR ON UNPAID LEAVE	0.20%

## **Appendix 3**

### **Statistics due to Motion 9**

### **from 2022**

At the 2022 national delegate conference Motion 9 asked the NEC to include in the Annual Report the following information.

- i) The number of Black members on the National Executive Council;
- ii) The number of NEC sub-committee chair or vice-chair positions held by Black member.

The director of the Executive Office therefore reports:

The number of Black members on the NEC =10  
(7 women and 3 men).

The number of NEC Strategic Committee Chairs who are Black =0.

The number of NEC Strategic Committee Vice Chairs who are Black =2



