

UNISON – growing a stronger union in local government

Local Government Service Group Annual Report 2024



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1. Introduction

Welcome to the 2024 UNISON Local Government Conference. On behalf of the Service Group Executive, we would like to thank you for all of your work on behalf of UNISON's members in your workplaces – defending the services they provide, fighting for better pay and conditions, and representing them in so many different ways. In a year in which the local government funding crisis has deepened, while the cost of living crisis continued, your efforts have been remarkable.

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

Once again at this year's Conference we congratulate the winners of our Local Service Champions awards – a celebration of some special UNISON members who have been recognised by their peers. We've also celebrated our members in schools through Stars in Our Schools – a campaign that this year will celebrate its 10th anniversary - and those in Further Education through Champions in our Colleges. But every single UNISON member in the Local Government Service Group plays a vital role, and we have taken that message into every workplace, and into the heart of government, as we have campaigned for a better deal for our members.

Last year we asked hundreds of thousands of our members to vote for strike action for better pay. In Scotland, a successful ballot was followed by effective action in targeted areas, with our schools members at the forefront. Our members' action won them a better pay offer, and we send our congratulations to them.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, we ran a major campaign for a 'yes' vote for action, with a huge amount of work taking place at branch, regional and national levels. The overall turnout represented a major improvement on the last time we balloted, and there were some really good ballot results in some branches. Ultimately, we didn't take strike action. But we know that the NJC Committee continues to review all of the lessons learned from the campaign, and we'll be back stronger in 2024. In March we brought together branches and sectors for an online seminar, to hear from those who got the required turnouts in ballots. We'll be playing a full role in the union-wide project on Winning for the Future, to further increase our chances of successful ballot results in the future.

As we write, we're waiting to see what pay offers we get, and by the time we meet at Conference, we'll know more. What's certain is that low pay remains a priority for our members, and it is imperative that we act on it. We know that local government is suffering severe financial difficulties. But so are our members. Our call is clear: our members need a decent pay increase, and the Government needs to fund it.

Over the last year UNISON has continued to be a leading voice in the fight for more funding for local government and education. Councils across the UK have suffered from years of under-funding from government; it was UNISON's research that revealed the £3.5bn funding gap faced by councils across Britain. We've consistently called for greater investment, longer-term funding arrangements, and a fairer system for distributing the money, so that those communities most in need to get the funding they need. But councils and schools are suffering from an immediate financial crisis, and they cannot wait. We have led the way in exposing the sheer scale of the funding gap faced by councils; we've taken our message straight to political decision-makers and developed tools to help members do the same; we've trained regions and branches on how to better understand and scrutinise council finances; and we've provided a range of support to branches in councils where Section 114 notices have been issued. In the coming months we will step up this work still further, putting out new campaigning and organising materials to strengthen our voice even more.

School support staff members represent a large proportion of our membership. They have faced increasing challenges over the last year – crumbling and unsafe buildings, low pay and a continued lack of recognition for their profession. UNISON campaigned across the four nations in highlighting the dangers of RAAC and demanding action from the Government, supporting branches and regions dealing with the increasing levels of violence at work, and campaigning against the Government's attempts to bring in minimum service levels. In Scotland, the Education Issues Group has led the way on a number of campaigns, including violence at work, additional support needs, early years expansion and building safety.

Meanwhile, we have made the early years sector an increasing focus of our work, campaigning for more funding from the UK's Governments, and impressing on the Labour Party the importance of improving pay and increasing the capacity of the public sector to deliver high-quality provision, should they form the next government.

Another key campaign for UNISON in education has been our campaign for free school meals for all children – and we'd like to thank members in Northern Ireland for their continued leadership with this campaign. It has been a busy year in Northern Ireland, with members taking industrial action in support of their pay and grading campaign, and we wish them every success as that dispute continues.

Every group of members that has taken industrial action for better pay and conditions deserves our support and solidarity. Among the many strong local campaigns, we'd like to congratulate social workers in Barnet, Brighton, South Gloucestershire and Leeds for their strong campaigns in support of social work members. And a special mention should go to members in Ash Field Academy, who after more than 40 days of action won a pay rise of up to 25%.

In Cymru/Wales, UNISON has been able to engage constructively with the Welsh Labour Government. While the financial situation remains challenging, we've made excellent progress on issues like social care pay and teaching assistant job

descriptions. We've seen a real recruitment surge, reflecting the work the union does on behalf of members.

Over the last year we have strived to campaign for greater equality across local government, supporting our branches, regions and sectors to tackle discrimination and make our workplaces more equal. We made the Year of Black Workers 2023 a key priority in all of our work, producing a successful podcast, writing to councillors across the country about ethnicity pay gaps, and promoting our bargaining guides. We produced and promoted a wide range of resources relating to women, disabled members and young members. And in this Year of LGBT+ Workers we are working closely with the LGBT+ Self-Organised Group to promote equality and challenge prejudice. Now, more than ever, we need to stand together and make equality a reality for every one of our members.

To do that we need to make sure we grow in every single workplace – by recruiting more members, developing more activists, and staying relevant to the new members we bring in. In 2023 more than 100,000 local government workers joined UNISON. Every one of them needs a voice, and every one of them is a potential campaigner and workplace representative. By harnessing the power of our membership, we will continue to speak up for local government members – their pay, their jobs, the services they provide – in the year to come.

Glen Williams
Chair, Local Government Service Group Executive

Mike Short
National Secretary, Local Government and Education

2. Local Government Service Group Executive

2.1 Local government finance and campaigning against the cuts

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 FoI 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 on 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.

2.2 Local Service Champions

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.

2.3 Future of Local Government

During 2023, the Local Government Service Group Executive project to develop a positive vision for the future of local government continued. This project is intended to complement and bolster the work of the SGE in campaigning for better pay and more local government funding. While the motion on the future of local government at National Delegate Conference 2023 wasn't reached during conference business, the NEC have agreed to try and progress it.

To this end, UNISON is supporting the TUC to undertake research with the New Economics Foundation into the economic benefits of investment in funding local government, which will be published later this year and which will assist in making a positive economic case for reversing damaging cuts to services. UNISON is also working with the Local Government Association to survey councillors and council leaders about the impact that cuts have had on the communities they represent and the difference that increased funding could make. UNISON continues to provide support to places where new devolution deals have been proposed such as Norfolk.

2.4 Service Delivery

UNISON continues to be at the forefront of fighting privatisation in local government. The ongoing crisis in local government finance created by the UK government makes our job more challenging daily. The sheer determination of UNISON activists and members to resist and fight for in-house service delivery is widely respected across the UK.

To support this work, the service group has provided training and webinars on anti-privatisation, produced briefings, and commissioned research to investigate whether local authority trading companies (LATCs) have reduced workers' pay, terms and conditions. This research investigated the extent of the number of these companies across the UK to support branches and regions in fighting LATCs, also known as wholly owned companies or arms-length companies.

The final part of the research project will be completed later this year with the report's publication. We now know there are 885 LATCs with a total headcount of 111,809 employees across the UK. The highest concentration is in the East of England, followed by the South East, North West, and Greater London. There are also 99 companies in Scotland. The lowest number is Northern Ireland, followed by Cymru/Wales and the North East.

The service group also provides a monthly spreadsheet of council contracts awarded or put out to tender and the contract length. This information can be used to plan your insourcing campaigns.

In 2023, UNISON focused 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 writing and publishing the UNISON guide [Bargaining](#)

[for Insourcing](#), produced by our Bargaining Support Unit. The guide takes activists through 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 contains many other campaign resources, including leaflets, editable leaflets, placards, posters, graphics and a short animated video. In addition, UNISON produced two films profiling how two branches ran different but successful insourcing campaigns. One of those films features Chorley and South Ribble, a local government branch where the [South Ribble waste](#) and refuse collection was insourced. The webpage also links to the UNISON in local government podcast featuring a case of insourcing leisure services.

UNISON's Bringing Services Home resources include the development of an in-person or online training course. Our Learning and Organising Services team developed this, which is available to deliver to all regions. 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 is suitable for the learner.

2.5 Recruitment and organisation

Local Government was the highest growth service group in 2023 with a net increase of 15,200 members and over 100,000 local government members joining UNISON. UNISON recruited over 104,000 new members into the Local Government Service Group in 2023 which is an increase of nearly 30% on the number joining in 2022. However, the number of leavers also rose to just over 80,000, a rise of 11% when compared to the number of leavers in 2022.

Of the 15,200 net growth achieved in Local Government in 2023, two-thirds were from Northern Ireland (+3,200) and Scotland (+6,400). There were significant increases in new joiner rates during the pay campaigns run by the Scottish Joint Council (SJC) and during the industrial action in support of the pay campaign. Similarly, in Northern Ireland membership rose significantly during the ballot of action in support of the NI school pay and grading campaign.

The week with the single highest number of joiners was week 40 (first week in October 2023) with 4,428 joiners. This compares to the week with the highest number of joiners in 2022 which was week 36 (first week in September) with 3,997 joiners (first week in September).

In Scotland schools membership accounted for all of the net growth whereas there was a net decline in local government membership when schools membership was discounted. Across all UNISON regions, schools membership accounted for approximately 66% of the overall Local Government Service Group net growth. UNISON launched a MATS recruitment and organising campaign in September 2023 targeting 21 MATs, with 8 crossing regional boundaries, 12 within regional

boundaries and, in total, encompassing 607 schools. Across *all* service groups and sector areas the highest area of 2023 growth was schools with +10,600.

The hard work done by branches, regions and the Local Government Service Group to run high profile campaigns on pay, protecting jobs and services and on many other issues, is represented in these record levels of new local government members joining UNISON.

Across all service groups, 15% of joiners (30,500) were young members - an increase in of 13% from 2022. In local government 13% of new members in 2023 were classified as young members. (Note – this is based on the previous UNISON definition of young members as those aged under 27. Following the rule change in 2023 to include those age 30 and under, the figures for 2024 will take this into account.) 46% of new joiners in local government are in the age group of 27-44 and 26% are aged 45 to 57.

In 2023 women constituted 76% of new joiners. Approximately 64% of new joiners identified as white, 18% identified as Black, 1.5% did not wish to disclose their ethnic identity and this information was 'unknown' for 16% of new joiners.

In 2023 there were significant numbers of new representatives recruited in local government with 1,428 new stewards, 344 new health and safety representative and 55 new union learning reps. Overall, there was a reduction of 30 health and safety reps when compared to the previous year – a reduction of 2%. There remains an urgent need to increase the number of members taking on both statutory union roles such as health and safety rep, steward and union learning rep, as well as other roles including workplace contact, pay campaign contact and equalities rep. The Service Group knows that branches are struggling to organise and represent members, as facility time is tightened and members are increasingly wary of getting involved.

The SGE's Recruitment and Organising Working Group met regularly over the last year, developing initiatives and reporting to the full SGE. In 2023 the SGE continued to prioritise organising and recruiting young workers and this was reflected in the close work carried out jointly between the Local Government Service Group and the National Young Members Forum. Local government branches were sent extensive information on proactively organising young workers to coincide with the TUC young workers' month in November. A fringe meeting on organising young members was held at the 2023 Local Government Conference.

The Working Group received a number of reports including a detailed analysis of the local government data from the Branch Organising Framework. This enabled the group to consider the areas where local government branches are stronger and areas in which many need to develop. In light of this report, the SGE issued advice to branches on some key areas of organisation that could be addressed. This includes the need to have a dedicated branch communications officer, to develop succession plans and to ensure that good support is actively planned, and provided, for new activists. The Recruitment and Organising Working Group received a report from the Community Service Group to start a discussion as to how best local

government branches can support and recruit members employed within the community sector. It is hoped that an activist seminar will be held in 2024 to take this work forward. New bespoke recruitment materials were produced targeting fire and rescue support staff which was welcomed by this working group.

2.6 Equalities and diversity

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

The Local Government Service Group Executive (SGE) has continued to publicise and monitor the disproportionate impact that cuts to jobs and funding in local government are having on protected groups, as workers and service users, through the Service Group's [save our services campaign](#). We have assisted branches in using equality legislation and principles to challenge proposals to make cuts and change the delivery of services. We have advised branches that employers should carry out [Equality Impact Assessments \(EIAs\)](#) to demonstrate that they have shown "due regard" under the General Equality Duty and to assist them in doing so. We also advise branches that NJC guidance requires authorities to have regard to equality standards and use the [Equality Framework Local Government \(EFLG\) England](#), the [Equality Improvement Framework for Wales](#) and [Fairer Scotland Duty - Guidance Public Bodies](#), all of which promote EIAs.

During the past year, the Local Government SGE has continued to work with the Disabled Members' Self-Organised Group, branches and regions on securing the legacy of UNISON's 2022 Year of Disabled Workers. The work of the Service Group has focused on promoting the use of UNISON's [model letter](#) to encourage employers and council leaders to adopt the [Disability Employment Charter](#). The Service Group's councillors' e-newsletter has regularly featured articles about adopting the Charter. Local government branches and regions are encouraged to complete our [short online survey](#) and provide feedback about how successful they have been in getting sign-up to the Charter. The Service Group has continued to promote and encourage branches, regions and the various LG sector committees and forums, to use UNISON's bargaining guides including [disability leave and model policy](#), [reasonable adjustments, model policy and passport](#) and [working from home and hybrid working and model policy](#) when negotiating with local government employers to make improvements to existing disability equality policies and agreements. To encourage disabled members to become active within the Service Group we have promoted UNISON's [Organising Guide to becoming a UNISON Branch Disabled Members Officer](#) and encouraged sign-up to the national online training to become a Branch Disabled Members' Officer. Over the coming months, the Service Group will continue work on gathering data on the implementation of reasonable adjustments by councils requested by local government workers as well as asking local government branches and regions to carry out their own audit of members' experiences of requesting reasonable adjustments. Our work on

UNISON's campaign to introduce mandatory disability pay gap monitoring and reporting in local government workplaces will continue to be a priority for the Service Group of the coming year.

Throughout 2023, the Local Government SGE worked tirelessly with the Black Members' Self-Organised Group on encouraging local government branches, regions and members of the service group sector committees and forums to make the [UNISON Year of Black Workers 2023](#) a priority part of our work. We used the year-long campaign to focus on building on our organising work to increase meaningful participation of Black activists at all levels of the Service Group structures. At the 2023 Local Government Service Group Conference we hosted a successful fringe meeting on UNISON's Year of Black Workers "Creating change in Local Government". A [UNISON Local Government Podcast](#) on the Year of Black Workers was recorded. This features two Black women working in local government talking about their experiences at work and union activism. Regular articles have featured in our councillors e-newsletters on how and why local government employers should ensure that [Ethnicity Pay Gap](#) monitoring and reporting are part of their diversity strategy. Councillors and employers have been encouraged to adopt the [UNISON Anti Racism Charter](#) to demonstrate their commitment to implementing a clear and visible [race equality policy](#) in their council. Local government branches have been encouraged to ask their employers to sign up to the Charter. In November 2023, members of the Local Government SGE attended anti-racism training delivered by Show Racism the Red Card. In the coming months the Service Group will continue to work with the Black Members' SOG to support the legacy of the [UNISON Year of Black Workers 2023 campaign](#). The SGE will continue to signpost local government activists to use a range of [UNISON factsheets and bargaining guides](#), including the Service Group's guide on [mentoring young Black people in local government workplaces](#), and attend training events.

The Local Government SGE worked with the Women's SOG to promote UNISON's [End Violence at Work](#) campaign and encouraged local government branches to get to sign up by local government employers to the [UNISON End Violence at Work Charter](#). We worked with the Women's SOG to promote UNISON's guidance, and other relevant resources, on the [Gender pay gap, Sexual Harassment, and women's health issues](#) including on [Menopause and mental health](#). The SGE called on branches to negotiate with local government employers on new policies, or to improve existing policies, procedures and practices supporting women and trans women in local government workplaces. During the coming months, the Service Group will continue to work with the Women's SOG on raising awareness of all forms of misogyny, aggression, sexual harassment or violence against women in local government workplaces particularly Black, LGBT+, disabled and younger members as too often these behaviours can be linked with other forms of discrimination. This will include carrying out an online survey of members to gather information about their experiences.

The Local Government SGE worked with the National Young Members' Forum to encourage local government branches to use [UNISON resources](#) to support campaigns on the [key issues](#) that matter to young people. During the past year, the

work of the Service Group has focused on the importance of recruiting, organising and increasing meaningful participation of young people in their union by encouraging young members to become a [Branch Young Members' Officer](#). At the 2023 Local Government Conference, the Service Group hosted a fringe meeting on recruiting and organising young members in UNISON. As part of the TUC Young Workers Month in November 2023, the Service Group produced and publicised a special [e-circular](#) about young workers in local government and encouraged branches and activists to promote it as widely as possible. During the coming months, the Local Government Service Group will continue to work with the National Young Members' Forum to identify barriers to young members getting active and to develop strategies to address them. We will continue to encourage branches and regions to promote the [UNISON Apprenticeship Charter](#), the five priorities set out in [UNISON's Young Workers' Charter](#) and encourage employers to adopt them. We will continue to recruit and organise apprentices and monitor apprenticeship schemes within local government workplaces,

Looking ahead, the Local Government Service Group Executive is committed to making the UNISON [Year of LGBT+ Workers](#) a priority part of our work plan for 2024. The SGE is supporting the work of the LGBT+ SOG by promoting this year with members, branches, regions and members of sector committees and forums. The SGE is encouraging activists to get involved and use UNISON's [resources](#), model policies and training to challenge LGBT+ inequality and discrimination in local government and schools. A [UNISON Local Government Podcast](#) on **UNISON's World Leading Work for the LGBT+ Community** is now live and is being promoted widely. At the 2024 Local Government Service Group Conference the SGE, along with the LGBT+ SOG, will be hosting a fringe meeting on the Year of LGBT+ Workers. In addition, the SGE decided to invite a keynote speaker on LGBT+ issues to address conference. In 2023, members of the Local Government SGE participated in UNISON's trans ally training and welcomes the growing success of the training across the Service Group. The Service Group will continue to work with the LGBT+ SOG to promote the [trans equality model policy](#) and strongly encourage activists in local government and schools to participate in the trans ally training. The SGE is also promoting training on becoming a UNISON [Branch LGBT+ Officer](#), the national LGBT+ committee's mentoring and buddying scheme and the young LGBT+ members' network to increase meaningful participation of LGBT+ members and young LGBT+ members in local government and schools.

The Local Government Service Group Executive will continue to monitor and analyse information relating to all protected characteristics to ensure that women, Black, disabled, LGBT+ and young members are fully represented at Local Government Conferences and within the Service Group structures.

3. Local Government Pension Scheme

For the LGPS England and Wales, UNISON has continued 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 continued to lobby the Department and the Minister.

There is concern that members in Community, 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 Pensions Unit continues to seek further views and opinions regarding potential legal challenge.

Following the latest LGPS fund valuations, 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 Autumn 2023 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.

Pensions conference

Over 100 members attended this event on 14 March. 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.

4. Education and Children's Services

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

School funding

In October 2023, the Department for Education (DfE) announced that school funding through the mainstream schools national funding formula in England will increase by 1.9% per pupil in 2024-25, compared to 2023-24.

In Scotland it was announced in February that the Education and Skills budget would increase by 5.7% in real terms.

In Wales there have been proposals to reduce the universal primary free school meals programme and the capital funding budget, brought about by the reduction in support from the Westminster Government.

Northern Ireland is still facing a crisis in education funding. The education budget was reduced by 2.5% leaving many schools struggling with diminishing resources.

UNISON is working with the other education unions to campaign for substantial and sustainable increases in school funding across the UK.

Education funding campaign

UNISON has continued campaigning on education funding over the last year. While school funding has increased in cash terms in some of the UK's nations, the picture across the UK is of a sector that is struggling to cope with rapidly increasing costs and demands, and workforce that is underpaid.

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. This was backed by research commissioned by UNISON from Landman Economics, which revealed that a pupil who started school in 2010 will have lost out on an average of £5,384 of funding as a result of budgets 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.

5. Sector Committee Reports

5.1 NJC Committee

NJC pay

The NJC pay claim for 2023, covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland, was submitted in January 2023. The joint unions' headline claim was for a pay increase of RPI + 2%. The pay claim was accompanied by a strong campaign, highlighting the cost of living crisis that members continue to experience, the loss of 25% of the real value of local government pay since 2010, the vital work our members in councils and schools do, the need for the Westminster Government to fund our claim in full, and the fact that it was affordable. The campaign featured a wide range of digital and physical resources and was very well received by branches and members.

The NJC employers made an offer of a £1,925 pay increase on all pay point from 1 April 2023. This was equivalent to 9.42% at the bottom end of the pay spine and 3.88% at the top end.

The NJC Committee agreed to reject the pay offer and moved to an industrial action ballot of members, which was run on a disaggregated basis between May and July. In total 345,134 members were balloted in 4,342 employers.

UNISON ran an extensive and exhaustive campaign, making full use of the Movement system for member engagement, asking regions to identify target employers for extra resources, with the Schools Committee selecting particular multi-academy trusts (MATs) to target as well. There was some discussion about whether to exclude those NJC employers with only 1 or 2 members from the ballot, but the NJC Committee decided to keep all core employers in, regardless of size.

We achieved an aggregate ballot turnout of 31.4%, which represents a huge improvement on the 14.5% turnout in the 2021 ballot. 75% of those voting said they wanted to take action. However, we failed to pass the 50% turnout threshold in any employers where we have 2,000 or more members. We passed the threshold in two employers where we have more than 1,000 members, Knowsley and Lambeth, and congratulations go to those branches. We also crossed the threshold in six employers where we have between 100 and 250 members. However, given the small number of mandates in significantly sized employers, and the fact that only 2.9% of those balloted would be covered by mandates to take action, after consultation with regions the NJC Committee took the decision not to pursue industrial action, as it was felt that we could not take the kind of action that would have any impact on the national negotiations.

In October, the GMB announced the results of their industrial action ballots, and like UNISON they concluded that they would not be taking action. Unite had taken industrial action in a few employers.

NJC pay for 2023 was therefore settled in November 2023, with backpay sought as quickly as possible. Some members experienced problems with Universal Credit (UC) due to the way backpay is accounted for in UC calculations. The Service Group provided branches with guidance on this issue, but it is clear that we need to avoid this happening in future by doing everything we can to speed up every stage of pay campaigns so that settlement can be reached more quickly. The NJC Committee is committed to doing this.

As part of that work, we will also be working with the other recognised NJC unions, GMB and Unite, to seek to align the three unions' consultation and ballot timetables more closely, and move things along more quickly.

Following the settlement of 2023, a comprehensive report was produced for the NJC Committee, bringing together branch survey results, regional input and comments from UNISON Centre departments to make recommendations for the 2024 campaign. These recommendations were being considered at the time of writing, but as well as trying to resolve issues with timing and our sister unions, it is vital that we refine and improve further our use of member contact tools.

The 2024 pay claim was submitted in February 2024, 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. At the time of writing the campaign in support of the claim had been launched, aiming to involve members, recruit new members, put pressure on the employers to make a decent offer, and demand that the Government funds it.

Job evaluation and equal pay

The Job Evaluation Technical Working Party (JETWG), a sub-group of the NJC, did not meet in 2023. However, it is anticipated that a Labour Government would re-establish the School Support Staff Negotiating Body, which will mean the JETWG will be updating and possibly expanding the current school support staff job profiles.

Each branch has been provided with a directory of the national profiles developed by JETWG. One method of job evaluation, which has been found to be legally acceptable is to match job information such as a job description, a person specification and an effort and environmental proforma against a profile. This is a more accelerated process than evaluating a job using a job questionnaire.

The Service Group has worked with UNISON Cymru/Wales on an initiative to produce revised teaching assistant job descriptions, commencing at level 2.

Councils are reviewing their pay and grading structures to address the issues of overlapping grades and long pay scales. Assessments of proposals have been made and will continue to be made by the Service Group and provided to regional officials involved in this process. Some authorities are undertaking a comprehensive review of Single Status to reflect changes in jobs as a result of decreasing numbers

employed in local government leading to additional responsibilities being given to remaining staff and to address the issues of falling behind market rates. UNISON is fully involved in the process and the Service Group will be delivering training on the job evaluation schemes being used to generate more union side panellists to sit on evaluation and appeal panels. The Service Group will also be providing continuing advice on job evaluation processes.

One legal issue to note is on what grounds job evaluation schemes become “otherwise unsuitable to be relied upon” (Equality Act 2010). Guidance has been provided in a number of legal cases. This includes where existing schemes have been adapted resulting in, effectively, two schemes operating. For example, introducing intermediate levels on the effort and environment factors, failure to take adequate notes of evaluations, not taking job demands fully into account.

The Service Group has continued to provide detailed analytical support and advice to branches dealing with equal pay cases and claims, working closely with the Legal Services department. In 2023 an equal pay ‘task and finish’ group was set up. This group brings together regions, service group officers, legal officers, the Communications department and the Strategic Organising Unit. The group has received reports on the support given to regions and branches; identified commonalities between affected authorities and hence helped us identify authorities where we should direct our future efforts; developed and circulated guidance to branches on how to identify potential cases; and put in a place a communications strategy to promote UNISON’s work in this area and make clear to potential members that UNISON is the leading union on equal pay campaigning.

Term time only workers

Following UNISON’s success in the Harpur vs Brazel case in 2022, we have been working to ensure compliance with this judgement.

Using this decision and the Part-Time Worker Regulations and employing a combination of legal action and negotiation, working with branches and regions, we have secured over £110m in back pay settlements for term-time only staff whose holiday entitlement and subsequently pay have been underpaid.

In January 2023, the government launched a consultation on changing the regulations for holiday pay for part-year, irregular-hours, and agency workers. These proposals would amend the law in respect of statutory holiday entitlement for term-time workers and negate the decision of the Supreme Court in the *Brazel* case. The government has estimated that this will cut the pay of part-year workers by £113m per year.

UNISON made strong submissions about the unfairness and impracticality of the new proposals. However, the government introduced statutory instruments to amend the law in December 2023 and published further guidance in January 2024. UNISON has sent updated guidance to branches on the revised legislation and we continue to

campaign for employers to retain the holiday rights conferred by the Brazel case even if there is no longer a statutory requirement for compliance.

We continue to work with a number of branches and multi academy trusts where there remain issues with the correct calculation of pay for term time only staff.

NJC Working Group on Term Time Only Working

The NJC Working Group on Term Time Only (TTO) Working published updated guidance in February 2024 to reflect the legislative changes. The 2022/23 NJC settlement re-confirmed the commitment to produce further guidance around the issues of sickness and sick pay for term time only staff and all types of parental leave and pay. Progress had been made in developing this guidance, however a further review is required to ensure that any guidance is compliant with the new legislation on accrual of leave for part year and irregular hours workers. It is hoped that the guidance will be published later this year.

Public health

The NJC Public Health sub-group continues to meet on a regular basis. Its main focus is a review of the Employer Standards on Public Health, the wider public health workforce, including environmental health, for example, and public health apprenticeship schemes – their content and the salary ranges, which vary quite considerably between councils.

Public Health funding continues to be problematic. Although £3,503 billion has been made available to councils to deliver public health in 2024, this still represents a £858m reduction in the grant since 2015. This is particularly disturbing in the light of a University of York study, which found that public health expenditure is three to four times as cost effective in improving health outcomes than treatment on expenditure. While the NHS grant is ring-fenced, this is not the case in local government.

The Standing Group on Public Health on which UNISON is the only union represented is channelling its focus into increasing both the workforce capacity in public health and the expertise. To reflect this, the group has been renamed Public Health Workforce Collaborative for England. The workforce strategy work will be based on the Faculty of Public Health's framework for a UK-wide specialist public health workforce strategy, which aims to inform a more strategic and inclusive approach to the development of the workforce.

5.2 Scottish Joint Council Committee

2023/2024 has been a year like no other, a year when we took strike action across 24 local authorities out of a total of 32.

The strike action came in three waves. The first wave under distinct ballot mandates was in Perth & Kinross and Stirling council waste services. Members here took strike action over four days commencing on 25 August 2023.

On 21 September 2023 UNISON received an offer which the Scottish Local Government committee agreed was 'too little, too late'. The committee agreed to consult members through a digital ballot, with a recommendation to reject, whilst still proceeding with an industrial action strategy to secure an improved offer.

The second wave of action saw schools and early years workers in the following councils take strike on 26, 27 and 28 September 2023: Aberdeenshire Council; Highland Council; Orkney Islands Council; Shetland Islands Council; The City of Edinburgh Council; Comhairle nan Eilean Siar; Fife Council; South Lanarkshire Council; Aberdeen City Council; Glasgow City Council; Clackmannanshire Council; Moray Council; South Ayrshire Council; Stirling Council; West Dunbartonshire Council; North Ayrshire Council; East Dunbartonshire Council; Dundee City Council; Inverclyde Council; Angus Council; East Renfrewshire Council; Perth & Kinross Council; Dumfries & Galloway Council; and Renfrewshire Council. In other authorities we only narrowly missed the threshold.

On 16 October 2023 we announced the result of our consultative ballot on CoSLA's offer: 89.92% voted to reject the offer on a turnout of 57.27%.

The third wave of action saw members working in schools and early years in the following authorities take strike action on 1 November 2023: Glasgow City, Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde councils.

All this action and the threat of a rolling programme secured an improved offer which put additional monies into the pay envelope including full implementation from 1 April 2023 (thus removing the staging CoSLA had proposed) and secured a timescale for delivery of £15 per hour. On 3 November 2023 the local government committee agree to suspend strike action and consult members with a recommendation to accept.

UNISON members voted to accept the offer by a margin of 69.6% to 30.4%.

Our collective strike action secured over £100m extra that went into our members' pockets at a time of desperate need. The dispute saw a surge in membership in schools and early years. The rally outside the Scottish Parliament on 27 September 2023 was one of the most vibrant, positive and large gathering of strikers, overwhelmingly women, that has ever happened. It was a sea of UNISON purple and green.

We congratulate and thank all our members for the solidarity and determination they showed and are working to expand our activist base from the many members who got involved in supporting the strike action. It was clear for our members in schools and early years there are issues such as violence and aggression which are of as much concern as pay and conditions. These are being picked up by our Education Issues Group.

The administration of strike pay for so many members proved a huge challenge and we record our sincere thanks to branch activists and staff who worked to deliver this. We have carried out a thorough review of our experiences and have fed that in for consideration as the union reviews its approach to industrial action.

5.3 Chief Officers & Senior Managers Committee

The Chief Officers and Senior Managers Committee met regularly during 2023. All meetings of the committee were held online. Throughout 2023, the work of UNISON members in Chief Officer and Senior Manager roles in dealing with the rising demands on our local government services and in seeking to manage ever tighter budgets show how indispensable they are to local government and the communities they serve.

Chief officers and senior managers (COSM) often work long hours in stressful circumstances, with our members showing leadership while managing complex services and large staff groups. UNISON's survey of COSM members shows how significant this problem is with a majority (61.3 per cent) disagreeing that they have a good work-life balance (38.6 per cent disagreed and 22.7 per cent strongly disagree). This is 20% higher when compared to the 2022 findings. The extent of the problem in relation to morale amongst this group of staff is significant with 38% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that they feel valued by their employer which is 15% higher than the previous year. As 89% have told us that they constantly work more than their normal contracted hours this information has formed part of the Chief Officers' JNC pay claim for 2024.

The Officers' Side of the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) submitted a pay claim in early February 2023 calling for:

- An increase of RPI + 2% for all Chief Officers covered by JNC terms and conditions
- An additional day of annual leave for all Chief Officers to be implemented from 1 April 2023
- An additional day of annual leave for personal or well-being purposes

On 5 May 2023 the Employers' Side responded with a pay offer of "3.50 per cent with effect from 1 April 2023" to be applied to all Chief Officer salaries and consolidated into basic rates of pay. UNISON's Chief Officers and Senior Managers Committee decided to consult members on this pay offer. A majority of UNISON members voted to accept the pay rise and a large majority of GMB members also voted to accept this offer. The pay increase of 3.5% was accepted in May 2023 with authorities backdating the pay rise to 1 April 2023. In early March 2024 the joint trade unions submitted a pay claim for Chief Officers calling for:

- An increase that is no less favourable to Chief Officers than the NJC claim (of 10% or an equivalent lump sum) as a step towards pay restoration
- Action to close the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps
- Joint work on model national overtime working and mental health policies

At the time of writing the employers are consulting on this claim and UNISON awaits a pay offer. The committee will then consider their next steps.

Work on mapping chief officers' membership records - including job titles and ensuring correct RMS coding - was completed in 2023. In the autumn of 2023 regions and branches were asked to ensure that their members' records are up-to-date and correctly identify chief officers and senior managers. In 2024 it is planned to establish and send out new UNISON materials for this membership group.

5.4 Youth & Community Workers Committee

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

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

The pay claim for 2023 was submitted in July and settled in December 2023. Members received an increase of £1,925 on all spinal column points and an increase of 3.88% on the London Area Allowances and Sleeping-In-Duty Allowance backdated to 1 September 2023.

Discussions will begin with the joint unions on the 2024/25 pay claim shortly, with an aim to achieve an offer to consult members on during the summer.

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

ETS Committee England

There have been many discussions over the last year around the Education and Training Standards (ETS) Committee's role in the national youth work register, the relationship between the JNC and the National Youth Agency (NYA)/ETS and its governance. Despite this the business of quality assurance has continued with new Level 6 Integrated Apprenticeships being developed and improved, which is seen as a great way to regrow the sector and professional youth work whilst noting many institutions were winding down their programmes.

There has also been discussion around sector development and the impact of non-endorsed qualifications. There is a recognition of the need to alleviate risk to staff, young people and employers by eradicating some of these courses and successfully developing and monitoring accredited youth support worker posts at Level 2 and 3.

ETS Committee Wales

The Education Workforce Council (EWC) has promoted the Quality Mark widely with the interest in applying for Quality Mark status never being higher.

The EWC have introduced a wider requirement for qualified youth/youth support workers or those working towards an accredited youth/youth support worker qualification to register with the EWC. In the past year 4 new organisations have registered 13 new youth/youth support worker practitioners and 32 additional practitioners registered with historical organisations.

Estyn, the education and training inspectorate for Wales, has been gearing up for the restart of Youth Work inspections with two pilots happening in February and March, one in the maintained and one in the voluntary sector. Estyn have been holding Youth Work Stakeholder group meetings with good representation from across youth services in Wales. These have been valuable and productive meetings, appreciated by both Estyn and the stakeholders.

Recruitment and organising

The increasingly difficult financial climate that local authorities face has worsened the impact of long-term austerity on members and undermined youth services attempts to recover from the consequences of the pandemic. However, branches and regions continue in their efforts to establish new ways to recruit and organise new members.

5.5 Schools Committee

The Schools Committee met four times in 2023, as well as holding a successful seminar in April.

UK

Teaching assistants

UNISON commissioned research into the extent of cover that teaching assistants are carrying out, the reasons behind this and the implications for staff and pupils. The findings will be key to UNISON's campaigning and organising work.

Stars in our Schools

A large number of celebration events took place across the UK to celebrate the vital contribution of school support staff to our children's education, with messages of support online from parents, schools, and politicians. UNISON general secretary Christina McAnea joined staff and pupils at Newark Orchard School in Nottinghamshire to mark the occasion. We also produced a report based on our survey of members which showed that school support staff were using their own money to help pay for pupils' food and clothing, even though many are struggling to

cope with the cost-of-living crisis themselves. This report helped shine a light on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on both support staff and pupils.

Techognition

For this year's Techognition day, an annual event which champions the role of technicians in schools and colleges, UNISON ran a joint survey with Preproom. Over 3000 technicians responded with the findings highlighting an ageing workforce with low pay and high workload. The findings were shared with MPs, MSPs and AMs to raise awareness of the issues they face. This work was carried out alongside the usual social media campaign day whereby technicians upload photos to demonstrate the hugely diverse range of tasks they undertake.

Building safety

UNISON was at the forefront of the campaign to highlight the dangers of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), and as soon as the scandal broke, UNISON led the way in holding the Government to account. UNISON has raised this issue with the Government many months before the peak of the crisis in 2023. Throughout the autumn we met regularly with the Government, pushing them to be transparent with the public, issue better guidance to affected schools, and carry out full inspections. We did extensive media work and were recognised as a leading voice on this issue. We also highlighted the lack of investment in school buildings as a key cause of the crisis.

Health and safety issues

In addition to the campaigning and media work on school buildings UNISON produced a 'school building safety checklist' for activists to submit to schools locally. We also raised, and continue to raise, with government our serious concerns relating to fire safety in schools with Grenfell style cladding. Throughout the year we also actively campaigned on the need for cleaner air in schools with a call for the wholesale roll out of HEPA air filters to all schools.

Violence in Schools

Unfortunately violence in schools continued to be a key issue for members. UNISON continued to develop its campaign materials for preventing and dealing with violence in schools, updating the model policy for reps to negotiate with schools and developing a project with the Strategic Organising Unit.

COVID inquiry

UNISON contributed significant evidence relating to schools, children and staff for the TUC submissions to the ongoing Covid Inquiry.

School meals

In 2023 we produced guidance for our members on how to protect themselves when dealing with pupils with allergies by knowing the legal requirements, giving examples of how to manage an allergen policy and what to do if a kitchen is not allergen-safe. This guidance has been well received by members and has gained UNISON a platform with high-level stakeholders. This work will now be co-ordinated with our work on supporting Universal Free School Meals, particularly the 'All you need is lunch' campaign in Northern Ireland.

A collective legal case for illegal deduction of wages against a private contractor, Dolce, resulted in a settlement for our members, winning significant financial redress.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

A large-scale survey of members in England, building on a similar survey in 2021, highlighted some poor working environments for members. We have been promoting our guidance, Working with Learners with Complex Needs, and are developing guidance on developing a violence policy to work with schools where members are facing unacceptable risks.

Schools seminar

A successful schools seminar took place in April 2023. Attendees heard from Angela Eagle MP and Christina McAnea, and took part in plenary sessions and workshops on NJC pay, disability issues, term time only and the Brazel case, menopause in the workplace, stress at work, organising in MATs and mental health. Annette Heslop, Deputy Chair of UNISON's National Black Members Committee, spoke to the seminar about the Year of Black Workers.

National Education Union

In April 2023 the TUC's General Council announced the results of the disputes panel hearing regarding the complaint submitted by the three NJC unions (UNISON, GMB and Unite) about the National Education Union (NEU). The disputes panel report upheld all of the complaints against the NEU, and found that the NEU had breached existing agreements. The judgement reaffirmed that the NJC unions (GMB, UNISON and Unite) have exclusive bargaining rights for school support staff. It also explicitly stated that, in future, the NEU should take no action that could be regarded as organising activity among these workers. The NEU were fined, and instructed to publish a statement on their website reaffirming which unions are recognised for collective bargaining for school support staff. The report also asked the NJC unions to find a way to take account of the views of NEU members when formulating future pay claims. Talks have taken place between the NJC unions, the NEU and the TUC to discuss this. These talks are ongoing and they have also covered ongoing concerns about NEU activity among support staff.

ENGLAND

Academies

We established a new specific section on UNISON's 'Organising Space' with model materials to support activists with their negotiating and organising work in academies. We also continued to lead on the national MATS and supported the Strategic Organising Unit and regions with their organising projects.

Early Years

UNISON became a founder member of the [Early Education & 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.

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

UNISON has been working with colleagues in NEU, NAHT and Early Education to campaign for additional funding for maintained nursery schools. Although some additional temporary funding has been provided, many maintained nursery schools are struggling financially and we have been supporting branches dealing with proposed cuts and closures.

CYMRU/WALES

A very successful school support staff seminar was held in February 2024 where more than 70 delegates heard from a range of speakers 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. Libby Nolan, UNISON president, addressed the seminar and shared her journey in UNISON supporting members and outlined her vision.

The Minister for Education joined the event and held a Q&A which included questions on term time only pay, low pay and violence at work.

In 2023 the Welsh Government announced a consultation on changes to the school year which sparked an overwhelming response from nearly 3,000 members. Along with the other education unions we are opposing the proposals and have sent joint letters to the Welsh Government and have created a joint petition with the aim of instigating a debate in the Senedd.

In other work, a number of surveys have been conducted with members. Members reported that their top priorities in schools were insufficient staff, workloads, reduced budgets, pupil behaviour and pupil attendance.

We have continued to highlight that support staff have not received the training they need around the new curriculum for Wales – in our teaching assistant survey 68% of members reported this concern and said that that insufficient training will undermine its delivery and impact on children's learning. Access to training on INSET days and as a principle of continued professional development is an issue that is being challenged by UNISON especially as support staff in Wales are registered with the Education Workforce Council. The Education Minister has been clear that the National Professional Learning Entitlement should be available to all of the education workforce.

Recommendations from the Schools Support Staff Workforce Board have been approved by the Schools Social Partnership Forum and revised job descriptions have been shared with local authorities. Work is being undertaken with branches to encourage local authorities to adopt these and to commit to one of the recommendations to remove all level 1 teaching assistant posts, appointing to a minimum of level 2.

SCOTLAND

UNISON Scotland's Education Issues Group (EIG) continued to play an important role in a range of Scottish Government working/advisory groups in 2023. Most recently we gave evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Education, Children and Young People Committee on Additional Support for Learning. We received significant media coverage from this evidence and have submitted further comments at the request of the Committee.

Violence in schools continued to be a key part of our work in 2023, and will continue to be in 2024, following our successful summit in January 2024. Local branches are rolling out the campaign with EIG support. Our next step will be to campaign on debriefings for our members.

Early years expansion has now been fully implemented but low pay and working conditions remain an issue in this sector with recruitment of new staff being reported as challenging. Government funding only provides for the living wage for funded hours.

Cuts to local authority budgets continue to impact on members, particularly on their ability to get support for children with additional support needs (ASN), which leaves staff to deal with the consequences.

We campaigned strongly on school safety concerns in 2023, raising the issue of the safety of school buildings, including asbestos and poor building quality levels. This is a UK-wide issue with the announcement of sub-standard concrete in existence in hundreds of buildings, and we worked closely with UNISON Centre colleagues on this campaign. In Scotland this remains a major concern for us.

Recruitment and organising has been a key focus for the EIG and we have used our Violence in Schools campaign to keep our membership engaged.

EIG also has a Facebook page – ‘UNISON Scotland Education Schools and Early Years’ - which has doubled in size since November 2023.

NORTHERN IRELAND

In 2023 we launched an industrial campaign for pay improvement and reform to the application of the NJC pay spine for school and education support service workers. This issue has been outstanding since 2019. Members took effective strike action, and we have engaged in a campaign to win broad political and public support alongside the industrial action. Now that a new public services budget for Northern Ireland for 2024 will be on the politicians’ agenda, UNISON’s Education activist team will be visiting workplaces to encourage members to participate in the campaign. Our teams will be active in communities seeking support from the public especially from parents of school-going children. The high-quality delivery of support for school-going children requires the retention of skilled and committed staff. We are organising members to send their message directly to the new Minister and all MLAS from all political parties holding seats on the Assembly Education Committee.

The provision and expansion of free school meals for all pupils in all schools is a second priority for UNISON’s work in education in Northern Ireland, and campaign plans are now accelerating with the return of devolved government.

The forthcoming reform of provision of special needs will throw up many challenges and is destined to impact significantly on our classroom assistant members. We will be undertaking widespread engagement with these members in the coming months.

5.6 FE & 6th Form Colleges Committee

Pay

Further Education

In England, the Association of Colleges (AoC) made a pay recommendation was following an injection of £185m extra funding:

- A consolidated uplift of 6.5% for all staff, subject to affordability
- Colleges to decide whether to implement the Foundation Living Wage
- A commitment to setting up a workload working group
- A proposal to set up a working group on 'what national bargaining may look like'
- Outside of bargaining, unions and employers to work together on a Just Transition to Net Zero.

The recommendation made was made with a commitment that colleges should be transparent about how much extra funding was received and that it all went towards staff pay.

In Wales, 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 3-year pay deal covering 22/23, 23/24, and 24/25. After many negotiations, at the time of writing the offer stood at a £2,000 flat rate increase for 22/23, £1,500 for 23/24 and £1,500 for 24/25, with the last year being contingent on receiving extra government funding. However, the offer comes with compulsory redundancies.

In Northern Ireland, directly employed staff benefit from NJC pay, terms and conditions.

Industrial action

Significant levels of industrial action have taken place in Scotland over the last year. Ballots took place before the summer holidays and a national day of action in early September 2023 was followed by rolling action across colleges on different days throughout the rest of September until mid-October. This resulted in three days of action in each college, spread out over six weeks. Since no agreement was reached

with the employer, members were re-balloted in November/December and action recommenced with a national day of action at the end of February 2024, followed by rolling action throughout March, April and June.

In England, industrial action took place at Kirklees College and Barnsley College, both on the issue of the lack of recognition meaning that pay rises and changes to terms and conditions were imposed. Action at Kirklees took place over four days in September and October 2023, whilst members in Barnsley took eleven days of industrial action during the same time period. A successful re-ballot led to a further three weeks of action in late February and early March 2024.

Policy and campaigns

Campaigning over the last year has focussed on motions passed at Local Government Conference in 2023. Motions were passed on increasing pay and funding in further education, proper national bargaining in further education in England, the Prevent duty and a national organising strategy.

For the national bargaining campaign, we have been pushing employers to meet to explore what this may look like, but we are encountering opposition, 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. Our position is strongly supported by the whole trade union side and will be a key part of the 2024/25 pay claim.

For the Prevent strategy, we included questions on members' experiences of Prevent as part of the 2023 Keeping in Touch survey. Of the members who are involved with the strategy, approximately two-thirds believed it was necessary, although many believed it to be ineffective in its current state. The FE and 6th Colleges Committee have been invited to comment on the findings before further work is undertaken.

For the organising strategy, we have worked with colleagues in Eastern region to pilot a strategy of co-ordinating local pay claims. This strategy will be analysed at the end of the 2023/24 academic year to assess what can be rolled out nationally in subsequent years.

The national Champions in our Colleges event was run for the second time on 9 February 2024. This year, the organisation ran smoothly - merchandise was available in the UNISON shop, the 'Nominate a Champion' competition opened for a month before the day, a web page of resources was available, an MP event was run three days beforehand to encourage visits and plenty of communications were sent to branches, activists and members to encourage involvement in the event. Disappointingly, the event attracted less interest than in the previous year, with only five branches ordering merchandise and only 55 entries into the nominate a star competition.

Sixth Form Colleges

UNISON members in sixth form colleges accepted an offer of 6.5% on all pay points for 2023/24. However, following a greater than expected increase in the National Living Wage, staff on the lowest points on the pay scale received an additional increase of around 2% in March 2024.

We have been working with the Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA) on a working party to review pay and grading arrangements in colleges. The working party will be particularly looking at issues relating to the use of job evaluation in colleges and the impact that the deletion of the lowest points in the pay spine has had on pay differential in the sector. Joint guidance has been produced on using the NJC scheme in sixth form colleges and this was published in April 2024.

5.7 Care Quality Commission (CQC) Committee

Following the resolution of our 2022/23 pay dispute in the summer of 2023 (after a period of prolonged industrial action) the joint trade unions at CQC made several demands in our 2023/24 pay negotiations with the CQC, to reflect the surging cost of living crisis and to try to rectify years of poor pay settlements. These demands included:

- A pay claim of at least Retail Prices Index (RPI) - 10.7% at the time of submission
- A 100% increase to car user and home-working allowances, and an increase to the London allowance of at least RPI
- An extra day's additional leave
- A two-hour reduction to the working week

UNISON's National Committee also called for CQC to adopt an updated or new job evaluation scheme which is fit for purpose, and to adopt a new, fully researched pay scale with appropriate pay points within the various grades. Finally, we requested that CQC adopt the TUC's Dying to Work Charter.

The CQC's approach to pay is bound by the Civil Service's pay remit guidance. The employer ultimately made a pay offer of 4.5% for the top 4 grades (exec level 3 and grades A-C) and 6% for grades D-F.

The offer also allowed for the Homeworking Allowance, Occupational Car User Allowance and London Allowance to increase by 4.5%. One notable difference in this year's pay offer was that the minimum and maximum pay points for each grade were revalorised. Away from pay, CQC also offered to work with the joint trade unions on reviewing its job evaluation process, as well as talking to the joint trade unions about making changes to pay scales/pay points and introducing a new

mechanism for staff to advance through pay scales. They also committed to explore adopting the TUC's Dying to Work Charter.

UNISON members (and members of all the other joint trade unions) voted to accept the pay offer. We had a turnout of 71%, of whom 58% voted to accept the pay offer. Talks to take forward elements of the 2023 pay award have continued and we are hopeful that the organisation will soon adopt the Dying to Work Charter.

The joint trade unions have been highlighting concerns around the adoption of a new regulatory platform which is causing significant problems for CQC staff who are responsible for inspecting health and care services across the country.

Change programs (restructures) continue to take place throughout the organisation. UNISON is attempting to bring on board and train up more new reps to ensure that we can manage the growing workload.

5.8 Ofsted Committee

UNISON members in Ofsted accepted a 4.5% pay offer for 2023/24. This was in addition to a lump sum payment of £1,500 received in April 2023. The joint trade unions in Ofsted are working with the employer to agree a joint business case to go to the Treasury for an increase beyond the civil service remit in 2024/25.

Excessive workloads continue to be an issue for UNISON members in Ofsted, particularly in social care and early years. We are working with the employer to try and address the long hours working culture.

The tragic death of Headteacher Ruth Perry following an Ofsted inspection has led to a review of Ofsted culture and we are working with the employer on the issues that have arisen following this incident.

5.9 FSA / FSS Committee

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) Sector Committee has continued defending members' rights and fighting privatisation over the last year. Challenging though the year has been, progress was made in the pay negotiations through increases in pay ranges.

The Sector negotiated hard for a 10% pay rise. However, the offer fell short of our claim, leading to an offer of 5% for civil service grades AO and EO and 4.5% for HEO to Grade 6. The sector achieved an increase in the grade minima by 5%, meaning that those members at the bottom received a consolidated pay increase. Another success was the increase to the grade maxima by 5% for AO and EO grades and 3% for HEO to Grade 6.

A consultative ballot was conducted on the pay offer. With a turnout of 51.7%, 51% voted for the offer and 49% against it.

The Sector Committee structure was refreshed in 2023 to reflect the change in membership, as the FSA Sector Committee rules originated in 2010. The new structure took effect from November 2023 as below:

- The Committee will be composed of 12 regional representatives - who must be Food Standards Agency employees, plus one representative for members employed by contracting companies.
- Northern Ireland has no regional representatives as it has a different agency to carry out official controls.
- There is one general regional representative for each South West, Cymru/Wales, and North West.
- There are two general regional representatives for Eastern, West Midlands, and Yorkshire and Humberside. (Note: This is because the branches that organise FSA members in these regions are organised across two UNISON regions. Eastern covers Eastern and South East, West Midlands covers West Midlands and East Midlands, and Yorkshire and Humberside covers Yorkshire and Humberside and Northern.)
- There is one regional representative for the Greater London Region to cover office-based staff. (Note: This region now has a representative because of the growth in our membership outside of the traditional roles such as Meat Hygiene Inspectors.)
- There is one convenor for all vets based in the Cymru/Wales region, one regional convenor for members of the National Food Crime Unit based in the Cymru/Wales region, and one contractor convenor for the Yorkshire & Humberside region.
- The regional representatives alone will decide on the negotiating policy for FSA employees' pay, terms, and conditions issues. The contracting company representative will only have voting rights for non-payment and terms and conditions issues. Members from each contracting company will decide their negotiating policy for terms and conditions problems affecting them, which will be done outside of the FSA Sector Committee.

Finally, the Sector would like to pay tribute to two outstanding convenors who retired from a long service on the Committee – Alan Howarth (Yorkshire & Humberside) and Mark Haylett (West Midlands). They gave exceptional support to their members and will be missed on the Committee.

6. Occupational Groups

6.1 Libraries and Cultural Services

As the budgetary crisis in local government unfolds, public library and cultural services are on the front line of cuts. Public consultations on library provision, cuts to library services and proposed restructures are widespread across the UK.

A UNISON Freedom of Information request sent to all top-tier councils in England, Wales and Scotland during 2023 found that there were 4,064 staffed public libraries in 2010 run directly or indirectly by councils. By 2023, there were 871 fewer at 3,193. If you exclude those indirectly run, the number of libraries directly run by councils has dropped from 3,893 in 2010 to only 2,607 in 2022/23.

The research also found that in 2010, there were 21 libraries run exclusively by volunteers that had once been part of the council's statutory provision. By 2022, that figure stood at 317. These findings, along with interviews with UNISON members in Hampshire, where 25% of libraries have closed, and Walsall, where 61% of public libraries have been lost, featured in UNISON's Activist magazine.

Funding cuts have meant fewer staff, cuts to opening hours, outsourced libraries and an increase in volunteer and community run libraries. There has also been a trend for councils to rely increasingly on staffless libraries and opening hours.

In Wales, where libraries have received the third largest cut of all Welsh council spending at 39%, the Senedd local government and housing committee ran an inquiry on library and leisure services. UNISON Wales provided oral evidence.

In Scotland, there has been a reported drop in full-time equivalent workers from 1,462 workers in 2017-18, to just 1,306 by 2021-22. According to the Scottish Government, the number of public libraries in Scotland declined from 627 in 2009-10 to 544 in 2019-20, representing a loss of 83 libraries in total, or 13.2%. COSLA have warned that without further funding, councils could be forced to cut library assistants by up to 1,400 and reduce library provision by 40%.

Research undertaken by the University of East Anglia during 2023 found that public libraries in England generate a value of at least **£3.4 billion each year**. The project devised a tool that library services can use to arrive at a value for the economic impact of local library services. UNISON has recommended that branches ask their management if they have access to this resource to make their own assessment of the economic worth of library services facing cuts.

Work is under way with the Equalities Unit and UNISON's Schools team to survey UNISON's public library and school library members to explore the experiences of UNISON members in relation to protests at Drag Queen Story Times held at public libraries. The work will also investigate censorship of LGBT+ themed books. The aim

is to issue resources and guidance to branches and members to support our members working in libraries and schools who face harassment and violence.

UNISON continues to work with The Library Campaign to distribute two editions of The Library Campaigner magazine every year to library members. The magazine is a vital source of news for our members working in libraries.

6.2 Social Work

The Social Care Forum continued to prioritise social worker recruitment and organisation in 2023. We ran another successful student recruitment e-mail campaign at the end of the summer (via UCAS), targeting students signed up to begin social work courses in September 2023. This achieved a good open rate and click-through rate, when compared with similar campaigns in the sector. UNISON's 2024 Organising Plan asks regions to at least double social work student recruitment. Guidance and resources have been produced to support regions and branches develop and grow student social work recruitment.

UNISON commissioned a series of films about the importance of social work and how UNISON supports the profession. Social workers are perceived negatively in the media and this project was part of our campaign to counter this, as well as feeding into our wider local government campaigns on pay and cuts. There are three individual films focusing on three of our social work members and one overall film featuring all three:

- Main film - <https://youtu.be/9YgP42hqb70>
- Angela film – <https://youtu.be/KSHk47cITJY>
- Evelyn film – <https://youtu.be/dt5GX1KqWuq>
- Istvan film – <https://youtu.be/hir-VDjEMBw>

The Social Care Forum continues to build up our organisation and a national social work seminar was held in September. It was primarily workshop based, focusing on:

- How UNISON helps members if they are referred to their professional regulator or think they should self-refer
- How the Year of Black Workers helps UNISON focus at all levels on challenging racism in the workplace
- How social worker self-care is more than a personal responsibility – focusing on employers' obligations
- How to recruit and organise around social worker pay

There was also a networking session for delegates to link up with other social worker members from their nation/region. The seminar was well attended and delegate

feedback very positive. There was much enthusiasm for more social worker events like this and another national seminar is planned for November 2024.

The Social Care Forum continues to be concerned about the high levels of pressure and work-related stress amongst social workers and promotes the Standards for Employers of Social Workers as a way of improving the workplace culture. Its accompanying 'health check' survey enables social workers to say how their working conditions match up to the Standards. We recognise there is a capacity issue in branches engaging with employers on the annual health checks. However, the Standards provide a whole system approach to managing workload pressures and we encourage branches to engage and follow up the findings with their employers. Branches were asked to work with Principal Social Workers to publicise the 2024 Health Check survey, encourage members to participate and then follow up the findings with management. Arguments to use and details of UNISON resources were set out in circular LG/04/2024.

UNISON submitted responses to Department of Education (DfE) consultations on their children's social work strategy. Members were surveyed on the key workforce issues to inform our responses. The message from our members was that the issues identified required significant funding increases, rather than reform, to make real change. Funding for better pay is needed to make the profession more attractive and lower caseloads to reduce stress levels and risk. Also, social work needs to be promoted in a positive light. Social workers remain an easy target to blame and abuse.

UNISON is represented on DfE's National Workload Action Group which is considering ways to reduce unnecessary workload/bureaucracy. The Group's interim report is awaited. Informal discussions were held with civil servants on DfE's thinking on a five-year early framework for social workers. The government will be consulting on the framework this summer and members will be surveyed to inform our response.

UNISON is also represented on the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) Professional Practice Workforce Sub-group, whose purpose is to provide a strategic professional focus to issues affecting the workforce that undertake statutory functions on behalf of adult social care within local authorities. We inputted into their guidance on flexible working for social workers in adult social care. This was followed up with a joint webinar aimed at team managers wanting to introduce flexible working, in which we stressed the benefits of working with UNISON on this.

During the year the Forum has supported local disputes and strikes over the disparity in payment of market supplements between children and adults social work. As mentioned there was a specific workshop on social worker pay at the national seminar. Delegates heard from striking social workers about how their disputes were organised. The Forum is now developing specific pay and grading advice for social workers to help branches in local disputes.

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

- Poor equality data about registrants
- Interim Orders being scheduled after long periods without new facts
- Short response time to initial fitness to practice concerns

We are also concerned about the fitness to practise hearing delays SWE announced in February 2024 due to budget constraints. Case lengths will increase over the next 12 months from a current average of just over two years. We are talking to SWE constructively but frankly to explore whether there is a common position on ways to resolve the hearing backlog. We want to explore procedural changes SWE can make to make to divert resources to fitness to practise. Key to us is the protection of the level of fees members pay SWE. Social workers should not be asked to foot the bill for SWE's financial difficulties.

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

The establishment of the new cross-Service Group Social Care Committee has led the Local Government Service Group Executive to change the focus of the Social Care Forum, which will be renamed the Social Work Forum. Its membership will be drawn from the full range of occupational groups involved in social work. This change takes effect June 2024, in line with elections to all of the other Local Government Service Group Committees.

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

6.3 Social Care

In early June the Fabian Society launched a report, commissioned by UNISON, outlining a roadmap to a National Care Service. It is hoped that the detailed report will form the basis of a Labour Government's social care plan if and when they take office.

The report has five key themes:

1. A fair workforce settlement

2. Building a service for everyone
3. A system with stronger rights and entitlements
4. Making adult social care a comprehensive service
5. See it become more affordable over time

The National Care Service would be a shared national endeavour to give every individual the right support in the right way at the right time to live well and independently. It would be transformative to the lives of hundreds of thousands of disabled people, older people and carers. Across the year support for the National Care Service has grown across the sector and has been backed by the Labour Party.

In late June UNISON released findings of a survey of homecare worker members from across the UK, which showed that 75% of homecare workers are still not being paid for their travel time between visits. UNISON has been highlighting this scandal for a decade but we have still not seen any decisive action from the Westminster Government to crack down on the practice, which results in care workers being paid below the minimum wage and care recipients having their visits cut short. The findings received significant media coverage and UNISON will be discussing the survey results in their upcoming oral evidence session with the Low Pay Commission.

UNISON wrote to the Care Minister highlighting the ongoing exploitation of migrant care workers, including widespread non-payment of the minimum wage and subsequently met with her to discuss the problem. Guidance has also been sent out to councillors across the UK encouraging them to take action to try and clamp down on the practices.

Merton Council recently joined Westminster Council in adopting the Ethical Care Charter, while Southwark Council increased the coverage of their Residential Care Charter.

UNISON is providing evidence to the ongoing COVID inquiry and will be applying for 'core participant' status (under the auspices of the TUC) for module six on social care.

Proposals for a new democratic structure for social care members in England were made and consulted on and will be shortly enacted. It will mean that the homecare forum will now cease to exist, but homecare workers along with all care workers will be covered by a new genuinely representative group of care worker members, to help drive forward UNISON's work on social care.

6.4 Housing

In July 2023, UNISON published a new housing report entitled 'Through the Roof'. This report was based on responses from over 2,600 UNISON members who took part in our biennial housing survey. The report looks at how the housing crisis is affecting our members across the public sector. It sets out recommendations, based around member priorities, on how to tackle the housing crisis.

To promote the findings of the report, UNISON held a round table event for housing councillors in November to discuss the report, its findings and recommendations. The event was attended by approximately 30 councillors (mostly housing portfolio holders within their local authorities) from across the UK. The discussion focused on the difficulties and barriers that local authorities have in delivering housing and housing services, along with local authority funding, right to buy and supporting public sector key workers in accessing decent and affordable housing.

Last year, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Council Housing began an inquiry into the need for investment in existing and new council homes. UNISON provided written evidence to the Inquiry, making the case for: Housing needs of all local areas to be assessed, housing targets to be set locally by councils to reflect the housing situation in each local area, for the Right to Buy in England to be suspended for councils in line with Scotland and Wales, and for significant investment in council housing, in the form of grant funding, to enable the development of new and existing council homes to meet housing need.

In September 2023, there was a major concern about the possible use of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in council/social housing. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) wrote to social landlords, warning them they need to find out if their homes contain RAAC. UNISON Housing Forum reps provided feedback about their local employers and how effective they were in determining the risks of RAAC in their housing stock. UNISON housing reps continue to push their employers for more detailed answers.

Following a renewed focus on health and safety within the social housing sector, there are new requirements for certain housing staff to hold particular qualifications. To support members, UNISON is developing a standalone training website aimed at our housing members. This will incorporate much of the remote and online training we already offer - but packaging it into a web page aimed specifically at our housing members. This training does not replace the training that employers should reasonably provide.

In late 2023, UNISON began working with housing charities/campaign groups Shelter and Generation Rent to set up online roundtable/focus groups involving our members - giving members the opportunity to share how the housing crisis is affecting them as public service workers. Shelter and Generation Rent will use this feedback as evidence to support some of their campaigning priorities - particularly around better investment into the supply of council housing and reforms to the private rented sector.

6.5 Careers

Following digital promotion of the Forum's work, more regions have nominated representatives to the Careers Forum, which continues to meet online.

In July 2023, the Forum Chair took part in a round table event hosted by the all-party parliamentary group for skills, careers and employment, on 'A Career Guidance Guarantee for England', promoting UNISON's view on the importance of a fully funded, properly staffed careers service. The Forum also submitted a written response to Policy Connect's 'Skills 2030' call for evidence.

UNISON has been invited to join the Careers Development Policy Group, a coalition of organisations working together to advance the provision of lifelong career guidance through the development of policy positions and campaigns.

In December, UNISON ran a workshop on negotiating pay and contracts at the Careers Development Institute (CDI) annual conference. The workshop was well-received and the Forum have now been asked to work with the CDI on their campaign to promote the value of careers professionals.

In the coming year, the Forum plan to use both UNISON's connections with the Labour Party and their new place on the Careers Development Policy Group to bring careers guidance onto the political agenda, both in the lead-up to and after the General Election.

6.6 Craftworkers

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

In November 2023, agreement was reached on the pay award for local authority Craft Workers, covering the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2023. The Craft pay award mirrored the 2023 NJC pay award, with an increase of £1,925 on basic salaries and 3.88% on allowances – back dated to 1 April 2023.

Due to the delay in settling craft pay last year, some UNISON branches expressed concern that their NJC members had their pay settled well in advance of Craft members (in some cases, members working in the same department).

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

For branches who wish to undertake local benchmarking, UNISON continues to develop resources based on specific Craft roles, determining typical pay and allowances for these roles and demonstrating how they compare with similar NJC roles.

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

6.7 Fire and Rescue

Recruitment and organising

The Fire and Rescue Forum met three times in the past year.

The Forum and Local Government Service Group have prioritised recruiting and organising new fire and rescue members and activists over the last year. We have increased UNISON's engagement with our membership through a circular for fire and rescue members and increased social media activity, particularly through the UNISON Fire and Rescue Facebook group.

There is ongoing work to increase recruitment and organising of fire and rescue members in the Eastern, East Midlands and South West regions and in Cymru/Wales, and we will share the lessons from this work with organisers in other regions. There is a newly created Cymru/Wales Fire and Rescue Forum, which aims to support Welsh fire and rescue members and identify a representative to join the national Fire and Rescue Forum. We have also successfully filled a vacant seat on the Fire and Rescue Forum for the Eastern region.

This year we have increased UNISON's visibility amongst fire and rescue workers and awareness of the vital work that our fire members do, by launching new branding and recruitment materials, releasing an episode on fire and rescue members on UNISON's Local Government podcast and speaking at a number of regional and national meetings and events. UNISON also held its first webinar for fire and rescue members in September 2023 to celebrate the Year of Black Workers and discuss ways to best support Black fire and rescue workers.

Motions calling on the union to campaign for improved funding to fire and rescue services have been accepted on the agenda for this year's National Delegate Conference.

Campaigning and Policy

After recent media reports on cultures of racist and sexist bullying and harassment found in fire and rescue services across England and Wales, UNISON conducted a national survey of fire and rescue workers on workplace culture, bullying and harassment to gather their views and experiences. The results are currently being

analysed and will be circulated to members and branches shortly. We anticipate that the results will inform further work on this issue in 2024.

UNISON continues to oppose the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act. The Local Government Service Group contributes to the union's wider policy response on this issue by providing its perspective on the potential impact of the Act on UNISON's fire and rescue members.

7. Regional Service Group Reports

7.1 Eastern

In our 2022/23 report, the Regional Local Government Committee issued a challenge to branches to be visible, active, and fearless:

“Where we are active and visible on a local level we are seen as strong by staff and the employer. We shouldn’t be afraid of disputes or even industrial action. They are tools of negotiation just like any other.

“Let’s take these lessons into 2023 and carry on the amazing work to cement UNISON Eastern’s place as the biggest and best union in local government!”

To say our branches rose to the challenge would be an understatement. It was an incredible year for local government branches in the Eastern region and the committee couldn’t be prouder of what’s been achieved.

It started with the NJC pay ballot. Our lay-led regional response steering group included elected branch offers from county, district and borough levels, ensuring members’ voices were central to our campaigns. Through their guidance and coordination of resources our region produced the highest turnout in a national industrial action ballot we’ve seen in decades. We used new tech alongside more traditional organising to get the vote out. Volunteer pay champions in every council, Movement, and staff organisers helped activism grow and net membership soar. The pay campaign turned a 1% membership decline into 2% growth by the end of the year.

This is why you won’t hear the word ‘disappointment’ over the national ballot results here in the Eastern region. We fought a high-profile, hard, and visible fight, and our members and employers saw it. Well done to all our local government branches but in particular, Uttlesford, St Alban’s and Norwich City for smashing the Tories’ undemocratic 50% threshold.

But we had even more success in local pay negotiations. Staff at Huntingdonshire District and Colchester City councils took a fearless stance against pitiful pay offers and emerged victorious. After hard-fought negotiations and massive organising campaigns, huge strike votes in both councils eventually won the day without members needing to take to picket lines. Congratulations to Cambridgeshire County and Essex branches!

The Year of Black Workers saw the Anti-Racism Charter signed in 10 local authorities with Cambridgeshire County and East Suffolk branches taking the lead on "establishing legacy to generate change."

A webinar hosted by UNISON Eastern brought together UNISON Black activists, chief executives and senior HR leadership teams in a must-see Q&A on the regional website.

When branches at the Local Government Committee AGM were asked why membership had grown so much, they were clear: it's because they've adopted the Organising To Win approach to recruitment and retention. It has helped UNISON become more visible on the local and national stages, more active on local and national campaigns, and more prepared to take industrial action on local and national issues that matter to our members.

With Essex, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire County, Central Bedfordshire Unitary, Norfolk County, Peterborough City and Southend-on-Sea all making it in to the top 10 branches exceeding their 1% target by as much as 5% to 8%, and with local government membership in the region outperforming the 1% target growth already, who could argue? Let's keep up the good work and here's to 2024!

7.2 East Midlands

Cuts and redundancies

In Derby City, the branch successfully averted redundancies following the closure of a private care provider, ensuring all affected jobs were secured in alternative facilities. However, concerns arose regarding ongoing "business as usual" restructures, which were not adequately addressed in the Medium Term Financial Plan, raising questions about the overall stability.

Derbyshire County Council faces a formidable challenge with proposed cuts of £32 million. This significant reduction potentially translates into extensive job losses, exacerbating an already strained situation. Furthermore, departures from National Joint Council (NJC) terms have led to disputes over pay and conditions, prompting preparations for potential action among affected members.

Nottingham City Council's Section 151 officer issued a Section 114 notice in November last year due to a £23 million in-year budget gap. This alarming development highlights significant financial strain and prompts concerns about the council's financial oversight. The absence of significant scrutiny on their finances raises apprehensions about the potential for whole council cuts, particularly in any remaining non-statutory services.

Support staff in Leicester City demonstrated remarkable resilience through 40 days of industrial action, ultimately achieving a substantial pay rise of up to 25%. This victory not only rectifies previous wage disparities but also sets a precedent for fairer compensation within the sector.

In North and West Northamptonshire, the focus has been on implementing new pay and grading systems, with successful negotiations resulting in salary increases for

most staff. Despite financial pressures, no significant redundancies or service cuts have been reported. However, ongoing vigilance is essential.

Nottinghamshire County Council faces a critical decision regarding the potential closure of the Cleaning and Catering Service, affecting 1300 employees. Efforts are under way to explore alternatives and mitigate the adverse impact on staff.

Chesterfield Borough Council (CBC) has undergone approximately 30 voluntary redundancies or early retirements in recent months. Since Christmas the tourist information and CCTV monitoring services have closed. Currently, four services are undergoing restructuring, and two services are being TUPE transferred to other organizations. CBC anticipates significant "savings" in services over the next two years. A red book review is underway, expected to lead to changes in terms and conditions, contracts, and pay, potentially affecting hundreds of staff. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) may become a target for further savings across services.

Leicestershire County Council has announced the need for over £85 million in savings over the next four years, intending to reduce the workforce by around 250. Most of these cuts are anticipated to be made through voluntary redundancies or staff turnover. However, increasing vacancies are leading to growing workloads, causing stress and burnout among members.

Ashfield District Council reports no compulsory redundancies, but restructuring efforts are leading to job losses. A rolling program of restructures is ongoing, particularly within Community Safety/Engagement and Housing departments.

Broxtowe Borough Council experienced redundancies due to the closure of Kimberley Leisure Centre. Negotiations are ongoing regarding potential changes to Bank Holiday entitlements affecting refuse, street cleansing, and grounds teams.

Pay and conditions

In Derbyshire, deviations from NJC terms have sparked contention, particularly regarding pay protection and attempts to impose Performance Related Pay. These issues have heightened tensions and may necessitate further action.

Conversely, Northamptonshire has made strides in negotiating fair pay scales, resulting in salary increases for most staff. However, challenges persist, notably in reconciling disparities in terms for TUPE staff and voluntary assimilation efforts.

Chesterfield Borough Council awaits proposals regarding potential changes to terms and conditions, following discussions initiated in November.

Leicestershire County Council branch was one of the few local authority branches to achieve a strike mandate as part of the NJC pay dispute. Activists at Charnwood UNISON Branch successfully campaigned to maintain some Green Book Essential Car Users Allowance that the employer sought to remove.

Ashfield District Council is exploring a "smarter way of working," aiming to streamline policies such as flexi-time, flexible working, and working from home.

Nottingham City Council is in discussions about TU facility time, with ongoing concerns about the impact of financial constraints on pay and conditions.

Privatisation and service delivery issues

Chesterfield Borough Council has witnessed the transfer of two council cafes to a private organisation and other services to voluntary organisations, citing "right-sizing" efforts to achieve necessary budget savings.

Derby City's integration of care staff into the Derbyshire Community Care Service aims to streamline operations without compromising service quality or employment opportunities, a positive step towards maintaining continuity within the sector.

Leicestershire County Branch successfully brought revenues and benefits services back in-house after 10 years of outsourcing to Capita following a political shift. Around 40 staff will transfer back to the local authority towards the end of 2024.

Nottingham City Council faces closures across various sectors, including adult social care, care homes, youth and community services, and libraries. Continuous efforts are made to realize savings amidst evolving financial challenges.

Recruitment and organising

Multi-Academy Trust organising has been a priority project in the region. Our project commencing in March 2023 starting with six trusts has seen a 37% increase in membership and a 245% increase in activists. New trusts added in October 2023 have already experienced a rise in membership of 22%. We continue to work on base recruitment whilst gathering intelligence supporting members and exploring organising opportunities and member participation.

In Northamptonshire, collaboration with the private and voluntary sectors has bolstered membership growth and activism, with a particular focus on addressing migrant workers' concerns.

Nottinghamshire Branch have worked hard to meet their Regionally set net growth target for members and active members in 2023 and developed a stronger social media presence which is changing the way they engage with members.

Leicestershire County Branch increased the number of online and offline recruitment events throughout 2023, resulting in membership growth well in excess of regional targets. Initiatives around UNISON's Year of Black Workers, including workshops on anti-racism, have been successful in engaging members.

Nottingham City Council experienced a surge in recruitment due to staff vulnerability amid significant cuts, with activists recruiting across all areas. The "Save our

Services" campaign gained traction through media coverage and community engagement efforts.

7.3 Greater London

Cuts and redundancies

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

Pay and conditions

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

We have looked at areas such as reducing violence at work, utilising UNISON's Charter as well as highlighting UNISON's Year of Black Workers and encouraging employers to sign up to the region's Anti-Racism Charter.

In respect of Term Time Only (TTO) claims, we saw payments to council employees on TTO contracts in Waltham Forest swiftly completed in 2021. However, payments to members in schools have been bogged down with endless delays leading to the terms of our collective agreement on individual settlements being revised. A percentage increase to all outstanding settlements has been negotiated in recognition of the adverse impact the delays in payment have had and the Council have committed to strongly recommend that academy schools adopt the terms of the Agreement. Hammersmith and Fulham have agreed in principle to a TTO settlement

of five years and six months backdated from April 2022. The agreement will (as agreed elsewhere) include compensation payments for those members who were in the Local Government Pension Scheme prior to March 2014, and ex-employees formerly employed on TTO contracts. Negotiations to finalise the details of a Collective Agreement began in January 2023.

Privatisation and service delivery

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

More than 100 traffic wardens working for private company NSL, on a contract from Camden Council, took 59 days of strike action in their battle to secure a fair pay deal. They were originally offered an increase of just 57p an hour, while the country faces the worst cost-of-living crisis for years. After 59 days of action, members won a pay increase from £12.70 an hour to £15 an hour, backdated from April. From April 2024 they will receive £15.90 an hour and there will be a further increase of either 60p an hour or the RPI rate of inflation in April 2025. This means staff will be on a minimum hourly rate of £16.50 by 2025, which is a great result. In addition, mental health social workers employed by The Barnet Group took over nine days of strike action in a dispute over staffing levels and a market supplement payment. The service, staff say, is facing chronic staffing issues, with the waiting list to be seen now up to 15 months. UNISON is asking for a recruitment and retention payment, similar to what the council has in place for its children's social workers, to help retain experienced staff. There is no difference between the qualifications required to be a children's social worker or an adult's social worker. Mental health social workers have expressed their frustration with heavy workloads, inadequate staffing levels, and insufficient resources, which they say have significantly impacted their ability to provide quality care to vulnerable individuals in the community. Following a re-ballot, further escalating strike action is planned for the period between April and July.

Recruitment and organising

2023 saw a welcome increase in recruitment. Whilst local government in the region continues to recruit the most members, we also suffer the greatest losses. All Local and Area Organisers continue to support current and new stewards.

7.4 Northern

Cuts and redundancies

Local government is in a state of financial crisis due to government grant funding reducing by 40% in real terms since 2010. This has caused a significant reduction in spending power.

A recent FOI request from UNISON revealed that councils across the North East have a hole in their finances exceeding £133m collectively for 2024/25 - adult and children's social care together make up the most serious long-term pressure.

Although none of the twelve councils in the North East have issued a Section 114 notice, Middlesbrough and North Tyneside have come close. Almost £100m of savings for 2024/25 have been planned in the region, with at least three authorities reporting a remaining shortfall. It is estimated up to 250 full time equivalent posts across the region will be lost through a mixture of deletion of vacant posts and redundancies.

The £600m government uplift has made little difference to the overall situation. For example, Durham County Council's allocation for 2024/25 will be £5.880m - this will only reduce the amount of reserves they are using to balance their budget.

As the total grant funding provided by central government has been reduced, councils' reliance on council tax has increased, and the tax now makes up around a quarter of all local authority income, with northern councils forced to raise council tax by 4.99%.

Schools in the region are also struggling to balance their books and making staff cuts.

Pay and conditions

Last year's industrial action ballot saw a large improvement in turnout across the board, following extensive branch activity and use of Movement. The highest local authority turnout was 42.6% and across the region there were 70 employers where turnout was over 50%. All local government branches engaged in the recent consultation on this year's NJC pay claim, through workplace visits and a digital survey.

We have successfully conducted several pay ballots in colleges and achieved over 50% turnout.

Several councils in the north are currently looking at job evaluation. In particular, the region is engaging with Sunderland Council regarding potential equal pay issues with their scheme. In addition, there has been an increase in Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) wishing to discuss job evaluation with UNISON to create a single pay and grading structure. This has been successfully negotiated in Bishop Bewick with no loss in pay for members.

The largest Catholic MAT in the region (47 schools) has also started negotiations around job evaluation across its four local authority areas. This will be a key bargaining issue for members and the MAT is a central employer for the Branch Support and Organising Fund (BSOF) MAT organising project.

Privatisation and service delivery issues

Chartwells hold a catering contract for 154 schools in Durham, procured by the council. At the point of transfer from another private company, Chartwells promised

the Real Living Wage which they have failed to pay. Negotiations are ongoing with a potential ballot of members being planned. Middlesbrough Council have lost several catering and cleaning contracts in schools this year and North Tyneside Council are privatising their school catering service.

Recruitment and organising

Branches have detailed quarterly recruitment plans and engage in several intensive recruitment weeks throughout the year. Overall, local government in the region achieved net growth at the end of 2023, with seven branches exceeding the 1% target. Branches continue to engage in Champions in our Colleges, Stars in Our Schools, and Local Government Champions. Early Years is also a target area for the region, specifically within the private sector.

To date the regional BSOF / Organising to Win projects in MATs have resulted in over one hundred school visits and net membership growth in each MAT. In addition, there has been the largest growth in new reps within these MATs.

7.5 Northern Ireland

Education

The absence of an Executive and Minister has detrimentally impacted on both education services and the workforce. Education services have been reeling from the impact of the Department of Education's demand at the end of 2022 to achieve £120m savings through education cuts. This scenario was further compounded by the severity of the budget released by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in early 2023.

Education services, particularly those programmes aimed at improving outcomes for children and young people living in poverty and disadvantage, have been hit particularly hard by the cuts imposed through the budget set by the Secretary of State.

Education Authority (EA) members and the school workforce

Throughout this year our membership employed by the Education Authority has grown significantly.

Our members voted for strike action on the pay and grading review and proposed cuts, and thousands took to the picket lines in November 2023 and again in January 2024. Our members did not accept the excuse that the Department could not release funding. Neither did they accept the omission of funding from the Secretary of State's budget.

The return of devolved government has led to a renewed campaign to secure funding in the 2024 Northern Ireland budget.

Other core concerns are:

- Cuts in support programmes in blended contracts for classroom assistants
- Increased responsibility of supervisory staff in catering and cleaning without proper reward
- The need for a framework recognition agreement with voluntary grammar schools and the ever growing integrated sector (all individual employers)
- Growing concern around resources for EA youth services
- The implications of the Brazil judgment on the calculation of annual leave for term time workers
- The impact of the Agnew Judgment on holiday pay.

Further education

UNISON, as part of the Joint Trade Union Side (JTUS), is pursuing a claim for National Joint Council (NJC) framework. The key elements of the claim are:

- A reduction in the working week to 35 hours with no pay detriment
- Covid 19 recognition (Cost of Living) payment of £1,000 net
- Two days' additional annual leave
- improvements to mileage rates
- A commitment to maintain pay above the Real Living Wage going forward.

Mid & East Antrim Council

Following a joint trade union pay and conditions claim and negotiations, the NJC pay award for 2023/2024 was awarded. Negotiations are also ongoing with the council on an organisational wide service structure review.

Department of Education Corporate Plan

UNISON responded to the Department's consultation on its five-year Corporate Plan (2023-2028). We highlighted the impact of austerity across education services, our campaign for universal free school meals, the need for delivery of a childcare strategy, and that the Department needed to progress initiatives to decarbonise education services.

Free school meals for all

Our Free School Meals Campaign continues despite all obstacles. We are demanding universal free school meal provision for all children and young people.

The campaign objectives are:

- To seek universal, nutritious, free schools meals for all pupils to both reduce poverty and improve public health
- To safeguard and promote the vital work of our members within schools catering; school meals should be publicly provided
- To build support for the implementation of a public health model across government that is aimed at dealing with health and educational inequalities.

The campaign continues with a renewed focus on the return of a new Northern Ireland Executive and Education Minister.

7.6 North West

Cuts and redundancies

Local Government funding remains inadequate with pressure on the budgets of local authorities and schools increasing. Local authority finance settlements were generally not as bad as feared, however when factoring in inflation, increased costs and demand there are serious challenges. It remains a miracle that some local authorities in the North West continue to function despite their low council tax bases relative to other areas.

North West branches continue to resist and campaign against cuts to jobs and services. The situation will not improve until there is a fair and increased funding settlement. Local authorities and schools must be fully funded based on their needs. In the meantime levelling up money creates a veneer of improvement, which Conservative MPs will include in their election leaflets in a last desperate attempt to save their seats.

Pay and conditions

NJC pay remains the top priority in the North West. It is critical that we are able to deliver decent pay rises for our members. The 2023 flat rate pay increase of £1,925 was yet another real terms pay cut for all members ensuring pay in local government remains awful and only just above the minimum wage.

The 2023 NJC pay industrial action ballot saw an improvement in the aggregate national turnout from 14.5% to 31.4%. The North West got many employers over the

50% turnout threshold but we got nowhere near enough of the major employers over the 50% turnout threshold to be able to mount any serious industrial action. Only three local authorities in the North West achieved an over 50% turnout with a further ten achieving over 40%. It will be important to act on the lessons learned and build these into future industrial action strategies. Improving membership and employer data has also been a key piece of work. The North West region successfully called for a National Pay Seminar from which valuable lessons will be learned.

Privatisation and service delivery issues

The North West region has continued with its insourcing project and training. So far work has focused on mapping of outsourced services that are potential targets for a campaign to insource.

The region also continues its campaigns in the outsourced social care sector which has delivered significant victories where local authorities have agreed to ensure staff on commissioned care contracts receive at least the real living wage.

Recruitment and organising

The Local Government Service Group ended 2023 in membership growth which is an improvement on the previous two years of decline. Five of the top ten net recruiting branches were local government branches and fourteen local government branches ended the year in growth. It is vital that the Service Group builds on this modest progress. Local government workers will join where UNISON shows it is being proactive and workers can see we are fighting for them. Identification and development of new activists will also be critical.

The North West region will continue to develop plans for a social worker forum as social workers have been identified as a key occupational group by the region.

Schools

The Regional Schools Forum continues to co-ordinate the regional response to academisation. More and more schools continue to convert to academy, particularly among the faith sector. A strategic approach is being taken to seek to resist academisation where possible and also to ensure UNISON continues to be recognised for collective bargaining for support staff and not the teacher trade unions. Regionally there have been resources put into a specific MATs project to support this work. Schools funding continues to be an increasing problem, each year this gets worse and is now reaching critical levels.

7.7 Scotland

Cuts and redundancies

Scottish local government finance

The information from branches is showing another bleak year for Scottish Local Government's finances. Our members and communities are paying the price for poor political decisions. The cuts to jobs and services are expected to rise again in 2024/25 – our branches are working hard to secure no compulsory redundancies agreements wherever possible, although we know that voluntary severance and early retirement are other ways to cut jobs.

The Scottish Government's announcement of a council tax freeze in 2024/25 at SNP conference in October 2023 not only cuts across local democracy but puts the so called 'New Deal with local government' (Verity House Agreement, signed between COSLA (Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities) and Scottish Government in June 2023) in jeopardy. Councils received a total of £147m for the council tax freeze, to cover a 5% increase. UNISON's Scottish Local Government Committee believe that the funding for this Scottish Government vanity project should go to councils without any strings and councils should determine what if any additional income they need to raise to meet the needs of their communities and workforce.

The freeze is unfair and adds to the crisis in local government finances. We believe the public understand that paying through fair taxation delivers quality public services. People can see that services are in dire straits due to long term underfunding by both UK and Scottish governments.

The new 2022-23 local government benchmarking shows the evidence of the impact on services in key areas, including the declaration of local housing emergencies, high levels of unmet need within health and social care provision, and cuts to libraries, community, and leisure centres. Further substantial disruption is likely, impacting on the Verity House Agreement priorities of tackling poverty, delivering a just transition to net zero and sustainable person-centred public services.

The Scottish Government has promised £62.7m from spring budget Barnett consequential to local government - the amount COSLA said had been cut from revenue funding. Councils have agreed to the freeze, although the claim it is "fully funded" is widely disparaged, however relations between the Scottish Government and COSLA are at an all-time low, when the Verity House Agreement was supposed to lead to a much more collaborative relationship.

Pay and conditions

2023/24 pay is covered in the SJC Committee section of the Annual Report. The working groups on the roadmap to £15 per hour and on other professional fees (the payment of Scottish Social Services Council fees – social work/care/early years – having been won in 2022/23 pay round) have commenced.

Privatisation and service delivery issues

UNISON's National Care Service (NCS) Campaign Group has continued to campaign for an NCS but for the Scottish Government's flawed NCS bill to be withdrawn. We substantively won the argument on the unfitness of the Bill, with the government setting aside huge swathes of their original proposals - including the transfer out of local government staff. However, instead of withdrawing their Bill they pushed it through parliament at Stage 1, on the promise of as yet unseen and unscrutinised amendments to come at Stage 2.

We commissioned an excellent report from APSE *Towards A Real National Care Service*, which sets out the economic case that the only way to transform the social care landscape is through significantly increased public provision. We have seen some progress in this regard, for instance home care coming back in house in North Ayrshire.

Our **Education Issues Group (EIG)** continues to play an important role in a range of Scottish Government working/advisory groups. Most recently we gave evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Education Children and Young People Committee on Additional Support for Learning. We received significant media coverage from this evidence and have submitted further comment at the request of the Committee.

Violence in schools will continue to be a key part of our work in 2024, following our successful summit in January 2024. Local branches are rolling out the campaign with EIG support. Our next step will be to campaign on debriefings for our members. Early years expansion has now been fully implemented but low pay and working conditions remain an issue in this sector with recruitment of new staff being reported as challenging. Government funding only provides for the living wage for funded hours. Cuts to local authority budgets continue to impact on members, particularly on their ability to get support for children with ASN (additional support needs) which leaves staff to deal with the consequences. Concerns have been raised about the safety of school buildings, including asbestos and poor building quality. This is a UK wide issue with the announcement of sub-standard concrete in existence in hundreds of buildings. In Scotland this remains a major concern for us.

Recruitment and organising has been a key focus for EIG and we have used our Violence in Schools campaign to keep our membership engaged. EIG also has a Facebook page 'UNISON Scotland Education Schools and Early Years' which has now doubled in size since November 2023.

Our **Social Work Issues Group (SWIG)** has remained active throughout the year and played a key role in our National Care Service Campaign Group.

The National Social Work Agency Advisory Group (NSWA) will now consist of a partnership between the office of the Chief Social Work Advisor on behalf of the Scottish Government, COSLA and Social Work Scotland. SWS are clear that they expect UNISON to be centrally involved in this.

Social Work Paraprofessionals – a presentation was made to the Scottish Local Government Conference in December 2023, and guidance on the use of job evaluation to pursue regrading was then circulated to all branches.

Radical Social Work Seminars – SWIG has continued to hold well attended lunchtime seminars on a range of topics including wellbeing, paraprofessionals, the National Care Service and National Social Work Agency.

Our **Housing & Welfare Issues Group** continue to liaise with Shelter Scotland and Living Rent on a number of key issues, including the Housing Emergency, Rent Controls, New Deal for Tenants and the Scottish Housing Bill.

The Scottish Government's commitment to prioritise funding for affordable housing was ripped apart by the devastating 26% cut to the Affordable Housing Supply Programme, announced in December 2023's Scottish Budget. The Committee are campaigning for Barnett consequentials arising out of the UK March 2024 budget to in part be directed towards social housing.

Membership

Our membership grew by 6,500 during 2023 due to our industrial action in schools and early years. Membership in other areas was more difficult. In early 2024 there was some tail-off in schools and early years membership, though this is being addressed.

7.8 South East

Cuts and redundancies

Slough and Woking councils were both subject to section 114 notices and government appointed commissioners have been involved in generating recovery plans. This was, and continues to be, a time of great turmoil for UNISON members at both employers, with high levels of restructure and service changes. Our local branches have prioritised supporting members through this time of change with practical assistance, advice and member learning opportunities.

Several other councils in the South East have struggled financially, with significant cuts being made at the region's largest councils - Hampshire and Kent.

Pay and conditions

Pay was at the forefront of the region's campaigning and organising work in 2023. Activity and engagement in campaigns for both National Joint Council (NJC) and local pay increased in 2023, with wider participation from branches and activists across the South East.

There were regular meetings for branches with members on NJC terms and conditions. These events created an opportunity for branches to receive updates whilst creating forums to share best practice for activists to offer support to each other. Activists welcomed Movement phone banking and peer-to-peer texting to aid our get out the vote activities and we ran workshops and sessions for activists to come together and become confident using these new tools.

With a high number of local authorities on local pay arrangements in the region, we prioritised ways to support bargaining for branches involved with this area of work. Draft claims were shared amongst negotiators in different areas and successful results in other parts of the region were used to help drive improvements to offers in other employers.

Recruitment and organising

Adult social work members in Brighton and Hove took three days of strike action in November and December in a dispute over pay differentials with children's social work staff. Days of action were incredibly well supported and resulted in renewed negotiations with the employer in 2024.

In November we celebrated Stars in our Schools, with events taking place across the region to celebrate the outstanding contribution of school support staff to children's education.

The region's local government committee held a well-attended spring conference in March at UNISON Centre and devoted time to building activity for *2023 Year of Black Workers*. Many of our own Black activists took the opportunity to share their stories and personal journeys within UNISON and beyond, and delegates took back a wealth of ideas and resources to their branches and workplaces.

7.9 South West

Cuts and redundancies

In the South West Region over the last year we have seen a range of techniques deployed in attempts to desperately make savings and plug huge funding gaps, thinly disguised using terms such as "transformation" and "rightsizing".

In late 2023 Somerset Council announced a financial emergency as a result of a £77m overspend in Adult Social Care and has had to make a series of "heart breaking and unpalatable decisions" to avoid issuing a Section 114 notice. These have included spending reserves, selling assets and reducing their workforce by more than 20%. Even with capitalisation directives from central government it is clear that these measures will only offer short term solutions, with many of our councils in similarly precarious positions.

Pay and conditions

Outsourcing, frequent TUPE transfers and attempts at income generation have all posed a threat to our members' terms and conditions and further increased workloads. Branches have expressed a need for vigilance with the erosion of Green Book enhancements.

Increases to the Minimum and Foundation Living wages have compressed differentials in lower pay bands, demoralising staff and discouraging them from taking on additional responsibilities.

Members were unhappy at the time taken to receive the 2023/24 NJC pay award and the difficulties this caused for those on Universal Credit.

The Regional Service Group Executive is taking a pro-active approach to this year's NJC pay campaign and has organised a seminar focused on empowering branches to maximise participation.

Privatisation and service delivery issues

Service delivery is a significant cause for concern, with it being difficult to see where any further cuts can be made. Discussions have taken place around the definition of 'minimum service levels' within statutory services.

Outsourcing and TUPE transfers continue to affect our members and take up branch resources.

The creation of one single business entity for Cornwall Council's arms-length companies has seen their reach increase. Part of their 'ambitious growth plan' is to provide consultancy to other local authorities, demonstrating how to adopt the same business model.

Staff leaver rates are high and vacancy freezes are also adding to workloads and demands for services.

Gloucestershire has seen some services brought back in house.

Swindon's Waste Service failed and their Children's Services failed OFSTED.

Recruitment and organising

In spite of dedicated Organiser time for Multi-Academy Trusts, it remains difficult to reach our members in schools and we have seen some losses to GMB and issues with the NEU. The Regional Schools Forum has recently been re-established and is a key priority this year.

We have seen some success in Dorset recruiting new reps through issue-based organising but all branches have experienced challenges with the amount of time and resources required to meaningfully recruit and organise.

The Regional Service Group has seen increased participation from branches and is keen to build further upon this.

There is a regional plan to increase our organising work in Fire & Rescue services, particularly those provided by local authorities.

Lack of affordable housing, notably in the most remote areas such as Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, is having a significant impact on recruitment and retention.

7.10 Cymru/Wales

The Cymru Wales Local Government Committee has continued to meet regularly, with the Local Government Committee Secretariat (made up of the Committee Chair and Vice Chair, the Wales representatives on the SGE and NJC Committee, the Head of Local Government, and the Area Organiser for Local Government) progressing Committee business between meetings.

Wales sector forums operate in Further Education, Careers, Social Care, BAOT and Schools and these have been functioning very well over this last year. In 2023 we added a new National Parks Forum and in 2024 we have introduced a Fire and Rescue Forum. The Wales Local Government Service Group works with the other NJC Trade Unions and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) through the Joint Council for Wales (JCW) and with the Welsh Government through the Workforce Partnership Council - a tripartite public sector consultation and negotiation body bringing together Welsh Government, public sector employers and the trade unions.

UNISON has played a key role in dealing with the fallout from the devastating 'Culture Review' at South Wales Fire and Rescue Service and the impact that it has had for our members. Working with Welsh Government, we called for and are now engaged within a wider review of our other two fire and rescue services in Wales.

Cuts and redundancies

UNISON worked with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to lobby Senedd Members ahead of the 2024/25 provisional settlement and after. The settlement for 2023/24 saw an increase of 7.9% with no local authority receiving less than a 6.5% increase. Because of this and the previous year's settlement, cuts and redundancies remained lower than predicted after the provisional settlement as the focus has been on recruiting and retaining staff in post. The settlement still caused a significant financial crisis for local authorities due to the lack of Westminster Government funding to the Senedd, the unfunded nature of the NJC pay award and inflationary pressures. In December 2023, it was announced that adjusting for transfers, core revenue funding for local government in 2023/24 would increase by

3.1% on average with no authority receiving less than a 2% increase. Every local authority has said that this was the worst possible outcome with some predicting that they could be subject to effective bankruptcy in 12-18 months.

Pay and conditions

Social care has been a major focus in Wales. Welsh Government have committed to improving pay, conditions, union membership and recognition for the 67% of care workers in the private care sector, as part of their social partnership and fair work agendas. UNISON has played a leading role in the tri-partite Social Care Fair Work Forum but progress has been slower than hoped, and it is thought that the unprecedented budget cuts across Welsh Government's devolved areas may have impacted on the agenda.

A sectoral collective bargaining body has been established (The Social Care Workforce Partnership Forum) for private sector care, which has the potential to be a huge step forward for UNISON and tens of thousands of exploited care workers across Wales but has not yet been convened. A Pay and Progression Framework has been agreed and a tendering process for detailed work, including potential pay rates, is under way. A new National Commissioning Framework will be 'live' by September 2024 and for the first time 'fair work principles' will be a central indication of 'value' in commissioning instead of just added value. This will hopefully open up the sector for care workers to join trades unions.

Recommendations from the Schools Support Staff Workforce Board have been approved by the Schools Social Partnership forum and revised job descriptions have been shared with local authorities. Work is being undertaken with branches to encourage authorities to adopt these job descriptions and to commit to removing all level 1 teaching assistant posts and appoint at a minimum of a level 2.

Our schools work has included a number of surveys with members after Welsh Government announced a consultation on changes to the school year which sparked an overwhelming response from around 3,000 members. Along with the other Education unions we are opposing the proposals and have sent joint letters to Welsh Government and have created a joint petition with the aim of instigating a debate in the Senedd. Members reported that higher priorities for them in schools were staff shortages, workloads, reduced budgets, pupil behaviour and pupil attendance.

In Further Education in Wales, pay is negotiated through the Wales Negotiating Committee for Further Education (WNCFE), where UNISON is the lead business support staff trade union represented by our regional lead for Further Education (Co-Chair) and two 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. There are significant cuts to funding for the FE sector in Wales this year; we are working to support members and protect jobs in individual colleges through our Further Education Forum for activists.

Privatisation and service delivery issues

UNISON Cymru Wales continues to campaign for a mainly publicly delivered National Care Service for Wales and in October 23, we held two major events with CICTAR and APSE, one for local government leaders and one for Senedd Members (attended by a number of Ministers and party leaders) on how the private sector extracts profit from public money invested in care provision.

In the past year, councils in Wales have reported staff recruitment issues in several sectors, namely domiciliary and homecare (including in-house provision), social workers, refuse workers and school support staff in some areas. The private care sector experienced some acute service delivery issues during 2023/24 which UNISON has used to build the case for greater certainty through public sector delivery, not least in the context that Wales needs around 30,000 net new social care workers by 2030 to meet predicted demand.

Recruitment and organising

Recruitment in local government in Wales surged by another 25% compared to the year before with just under 6,300 new local government members joining in Wales in 2023 (compared to just over 5,000 in 2022) and a net gain of over 500 members. At the Cymru Wales Local Government Committee throughout 2023, branch representatives agreed to continue boosting our campaigning, visibility and effectiveness of our committee activity whilst embarking on a major digital update your details campaign.

Our organising-focussed Schools Seminar held in February 2024 was an enormously successful event which has received very positive feedback from over 70 school support staff delegates from across Wales. Delegates heard from a range of speakers 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 seminar was addressed by Jeremy Miles MS our Education Minister who also engaged in a Q&A which included questions on term time only pay, low pay and violence at work. Delegates were thanked by Mr Miles for the work they do in schools every day and commitments to continue to explore how improvements can be made were reinforced. Libby Nolan, UNISON President addressed the seminar and shared her journey in UNISON supporting members and outlined her vision.

Devolved social care organising is a priority for the 'Organising To Win' agenda and we have targeted 10 priority employers for organising, including a BSOF project on two of the targets.

7.11 West Midlands

Cuts and redundancies

The region did not experience severe cuts and redundancies across 2023, however most branch secretaries have reported that the ongoing response to cuts from previous years has continued to affect service delivery. Given the crisis in local government in relation to funding, 2024 will be impacted by cuts and redundancies, for example, Herefordshire Council are offering a resignation scheme for 100 members of staff.

Birmingham City Council

Birmingham City Council issued a section 114 in September 2023, and have announced 600 redundancies whilst they look to save at least £300 million over the next two years. Additionally, the Council have unresolved equal pay liabilities of between £650 and £750 million. UNISON has lodged nearly 2500 equal pay claims on behalf of members in grades 2-6.

A voluntary redundancy programme is under way, and UNISON has ensured that any member wanting to leave will not have their equal pay claim compromised by doing so. A programme of work is under way on implementing a new pay spine by March 2025 to remove further equal pay liabilities and UNISON fought off the involvement of a private company, Korn Ferry Hay to run this project. The branch and region also commissioned a detailed report from APSE examining the detail of the council's finances, which will be of huge value as we continue to campaign on behalf of members amidst an incredibly difficult financial situation in Birmingham. A campaign website and petition has been launched, and there has been a lobby of the council, with more activity planned.

Pay and conditions

A four year back pay offer at City of Wolverhampton Council was made to term time only members who had suffered detrimentally compared to those working full time. Following negotiation, Telford and Wrekin council agreed not to include additional bank holidays in the TTO annual leave calculations (coronation, and state funeral) and backdated these adjustments to January 2022. There was implementation of a new pay spine at Staffordshire Moorlands District council; the majority of members saw an increase in their pay.

Participation in the local government pay ballot was higher than previous turnouts. The turnout threshold was passed in 45 employers, including one district council. Sandwell MBC achieved the highest turnout in respect of authorities including school members – a turnout of 37%, up from 15% when the ballot was run in 2021.

Privatisation and service delivery issues

UNISON negotiated for members at the private sector company “the Alliance” (Staffordshire Moorlands Branch), ensuring that this company matched the NJC pay offer and in addition agreed to implement the extra day of annual leave that had been agreed in the 2022/23 settlement. A dispute with Veolia (Solihull Branch) was settled without the members having to take industrial action. It resulted in a two year pay deal, with a pay rise of 12.5% in the first year for the lowest paid.

The union have taken a collective inducement claim against Chartwells (Staffordshire UNION) for 60 members who were not consulted about pay, despite UNISON having a history of bargaining with the employer.

Recruitment and organising

The local government branches in the West Midlands finished with growth of 591 members, while 74 activists were trained. The BSOF organiser working with Herefordshire schools recruited 172 new members in 12 months, and grew the schools membership by 13%. This was through a programme of regular organised visits. The regional schools team increased the number of recognition agreements to 38 (from 23) across the MATs that span our branches. Branch officers were key in helping increase these agreements,

The region has been engaging with our social care members, through phone calls and a Facebook group alongside regular communication, with the aim of encouraging participation and establishing a social care forum.

Several race charters have been signed with the region’s MATs including Our Lady & All Saints Catholic MAT.

7.12 Yorkshire and Humberside

Cuts and redundancies

It is reported by the Local Government Association that in Yorkshire & Humberside there is a £350m collective shortfall for councils for 2024/25, and a number of councils have begun to announce significant cuts in jobs and services.

The cash crisis in local authorities will mean even more cuts to services and further hardship for communities everywhere. In 2023 Kirklees Council announced 750 full time equivalent (FTE) compulsory redundancies. Funding that Kirklees Council gives to other public services such as Kirklees Active Leisure (KAL) and Calderdale & Kirklees Careers has been cut and consequently KAL announced 250 job losses and C&K Careers are also consulting on redundancies.

Leeds City Council announced in 2023 that they could see around 750 FTE jobs cut to help address financial deficits. The Council is also looking at building closures which could see some vital services moved out of key areas where they're needed most.

Pay and conditions

Members at Barnsley College took eleven days of strike action over the right to local pay bargaining. The dispute was resolved in February and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by UNISON and the College.

Members at Kirklees College took four days of strike action over pay which resulted in a pay award of up to 15% for the lowest paid.

Members at Humberside Airport took one day of strike action and achieved a pay rise of almost £1,900.

Children's social workers employed by Leeds City Council achieved a number of positive outcomes following their trade dispute about working standards including caseload size.

Cemetery maintenance staff in Rotherham, employed by private contractor Glendale Grounds Maintenance, were involved in a long-running dispute over pay which was resolved in 2023. The agreed pay rise means the lowest-paid workers will see their salary increase by almost 30% over the two-year period.

Privatisation and service delivery issues

In April 2023 Bradford Council TUPE transferred 1500 employees into a newly created Children's Trust due to a directive from central government in response to poor CQC inspection results and the tragic death of baby Star Hobson.

Elsewhere in the region, Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST), set up in 2014, transferred provision back to the Council in April 2023. The TUPE was 'static' and NJC pay settlements will not apply.

On 1 April 2024 North Yorkshire moved to a unitary system of local government. The District and Borough Councils no longer exist as they have been incorporated into the new council. Negotiations to protect members have been ongoing during 2023 and 98% of members in the County Council voted to accept the new terms and conditions as they are more favourable. For members in the District and Borough Councils their terms and conditions are to be protected under TUPE with the option if they so wish to go onto the new council's terms and conditions once they transfer.

Recruitment and organising

We have a small Local Organiser Team in the region who are deployed on project bids in branches to assist branch organising across all Service Groups. During 2023 in Local Government their work was primarily focussed on schools. Two Local Organisers have been assigned to the Multi Academy Trust project and Barnsley and Rotherham Branches will have support of a BSOF organiser.

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

Local Government Service Group Executive

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

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

SECTOR COMMITTEES

FE Sixth Form and Colleges Committee

Dniel Orton (East Midlands), Alan Copley (Greater London), Gavin Cartwright (West Midlands), Lynda Whitebeard (West Midlands), Julie Robinson (West Midlands), Chris Greenshields (Scotland), Mair Wyn Jones (Cymru/Wales), Maxine Young (Northern), Fran Murray (North West), Nikki Fabry (South East), Kevin Dacombe (South East), Jeanette Kitteringham (Yorkshire and Humberside), Katie Hall (HESGE observer)

FE Support Staff Trade Union Side

Gavin Cartwright, Maxine Young

National Officer: Leigh Powell (FE), Ben Thomas (6th Form)

Sixth Form Colleges Trade Union Side

Nikki Fabry, Jeanette Kitteringham, Kevin Dacombe, Julie Robinson.

Secretary: Ben Thomas

UNISON NJC Committee

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

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

UNISON NJC Trade Union Side

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

UNISON NJC Trade Union Side Executive

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

Scottish Local Government Committee

General seats: Jan Andrews, Arthur Nicoll, Steven Larkin, William Shearer, Mark Ferguson, Scott Donohoe, Tom Connolly

Women's seats: Inez Kirk, Colette Hunter, Roz Ronan, Marie Quigley, Brenda Aitchison, Susanne Gens, Margaret Gallacher, Lorraine Thomson

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

Chief Officers and Senior Managers Committee

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

Secretary: Ruth Levin

Assistant National Officer: Marilyn Bailey

Care Quality Commission Committee

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

National Officer: Matthew Egan

FSA Sector Committee

Richard Collier (Yorkshire & Humberside), John Price (SGE), Alan Colson (Eastern), Chris Tozer (Eastern) Graham Cross (Cymru/Wales), John Rowland (South West), Andrew Mclean (West Midlands), Darren Hough (West Midlands), Darren Pickering (Yorkshire & Humberside), Wayne Parker (FSA-National Food Crime Unit), and Christin Price (FSA-Official Veterinarians), Vacancy (Contractors), Vacancy (FSA-Office based staff), Vacancy (North West).

Secretary: Paul Bell

OFSTED Committee

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

Secretary: Ben Thomas

School Sector Committee

Phillipa Moore (Eastern), Becky Everett / David Wand (East Midlands), Tracey Adnan / Hugo Pierre (Greater London), Jane Shortland / Karen Jackson (Northern), Anne Taggart / Samantha Bronze (Northern Ireland), Pam Howard / Cathryn Baggaley (North West), Lorraine Thomson / Avril Brady (Scotland), Tracey Baker / Keith Manville (South East), Jessica Powell / Zoe Gardner (South West), Jonathan Lewis / Sara Allen (Cymru/Wales), Carol Garfield / David Williams (West Midlands), Julie Toyne / Lisa Smith (Yorkshire & Humber), Vacant (NJC)

National Secretary: Mike Short
National Officer: Joanna Parry
National Officer: Chris Fabby
Assistant National Officer: Rebecca Passingham

Youth and Community Workers Committee

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

Secretary: Abby Kimantas
Assistant National Officer: Natalie Ntim

SERVICE GROUP WIDE FORUMS

Careers Service Forum

Ali Sheriff (Eastern), Andrew McGregor (North West), Charlie Friel (West Midlands), Gareth Jones (Cymru/Wales), Paul Hohn (Yorkshire and Humberside), Helen Mallows (South East), Vincent Agorini and Aileen Langtry-Palmer (jobshare, East Midlands), Vacancy (Scotland), Vacancy (Greater London), Vacancy (Northern), Vacancy (Northern Ireland), Vacancy (South West).

Contact Officer: Rebecca Passingham

Fire and Rescue Forum

Janet Farrell (Eastern), Jacob Collier (East Midlands), Afi Khan (Greater London), David Drummond (Northern), Jonathan Cooper (North West), Andrew Fowler (South West), Angela Johnson (West Midlands), Edwin Jeffries (SGE)

Contact Officer: Natalie Ntim
Committee Administrator: Alexandra Murray

Home Care Forum

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

National Officer: Matthew Egan

Housing Forum

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

Assistant National Officer: James Bull

Social Care Forum

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

National Officer: Gill Archer

WORKING GROUPS

Devolution Working Group

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

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

LGPS Working Group

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

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

Pay and Service Conditions Working Group

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

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

Recruitment and Organising Working Group

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

Senior National Officer: Ruth Levin
Committee Administrator: Indira Patel

Service Delivery Working Group

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

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

Local Government Equalities Liaison Committee

Pam Howard (SGE), Kathleen Kennedy (SGE), Shazziah Rock (SGE), Janet Green (SGE), Jackie Lewis (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender + Committee), Penny Smith (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender + Committee), Sonia Stewart (National Black Members' Committee), James Minto (National Black Members Committee), Sarah Feeney (National Women's Committee), Vacancy (National Women's Committee), Carl Phillips (National Disabled Members Committee), Tara Thomas (National Disabled Members Committee), Terri Pearson (National Young Members Forum), Vacancy (National Young Members Forum).

Secretary: Ruth Levin
Assistant National Officer: Marilyn Bailey

Appendix B – 2023 Local government service group conference decisions

- | | | |
|-----|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. | Bring back sector-wide bargaining in FE colleges in England | Carried |
| 2. | The PREVENT duty on colleges | Carried |
| | Composite A (Motions 3, 6 and 9) Pay in Further Education | Carried |
| 4. | Organising in Multi Academy Trusts and ending fragmentation | Carried |
| | Composite B (Motions 5, 7 and Amendment 5.1) Early Years Funding and Private Day Nurseries | Carried |
| 8. | Schools Funding & Finance Training | Carried |
| 12. | Taking the organising lead in Further Education | Carried |
| 13. | Using school forums as an organising tool | Carried |
| 14. | Fighting for the future of local government | Carried |
| 15. | Cuts and funding | Carried as Amended by 15.1, 15.2 |
| 16. | The cost-of-living crisis and local government workers | Carried |
| 17. | Local government funding – a national crisis | Carried |
| 18. | Food Standards Agency – pay, terms and conditions | Carried |
| 19. | Equal pensions for surviving spouses and civil partners | Carried |
| 21. | Pay campaigning in local government | Carried |

Composite C (Motions 22, 25 and Amendment 22.1) Securing the Legacy and Making 2023 the Year of Black Workers		Carried
24.	Building trans equality in local government	Carried
27.	Fighting cuts to local services and protecting disabled workers' jobs	Carried
31.	Campaigning for better pay and preparing for industrial action Carried as Amended by 31.1	
32.	Menopause awareness and support in local government Carried as Amended by 32.1, 32.2	
33.	Promoting the Anti Racism Charter in the public sector	Carried
Composite D (Motions 34, 35 and Amendments 34.1 and 35.1) Pay Campaigning and Beating Industrial Action Thresholds		Carried
38.	Improving facility time for local government activists	Carried
39.	Empowering our reps in the fight against outsourcing	Carried
40.	Care workers	Carried
41.	Adult social care	Carried
42.	Council provided care Carried as Amended by 42.1	
43.	Caring for our carers	Carried
Emergency Motion 1 Education Cuts in Northern Ireland		Carried

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