

A better life at work

UNISON annual report
2024–2025

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General Secretary's Foreword

This year we meet for Conference having finally seen the back of Conservative rule after 14 years of damaging failure and division. The change in government since our last National Delegate Conference marks the beginning of a new chapter in our union's campaign for properly funded public services and fair treatment for all those that deliver them.

UNISON played our part in helping to guarantee the Tories were banished from Downing Street. We also managed to ensure that our members' top priorities were reflected in the Labour Party's general election manifesto. Chief among these were measures to improve employment rights as part of the new deal for working people.

The party has delivered on this in government, with the Employment Rights Bill set to remove the worst anti-union legislation and create an opportunity for positive change for workers across the UK. This includes protecting those on zero-hours contracts, clamping down on fire and rehire, and bringing trade union laws into the 21st century. UNISON has kept up the pressure on government throughout the Bill's Parliamentary progress to make sure they stand firm in the face of a predictable onslaught from the right-wing media and business groups.

The Employment Rights Bill also marks a crucial first stage in the establishment of a National Care Service. It legislates to set up the Adult Social Care Negotiating Body for England (and similar bodies in Scotland and Wales) which will be charged with developing the first Fair Pay Agreement for the sector. The FPA is something UNISON has been fighting hard for because a guarantee of fair pay and decent terms and conditions has the potential to be a gamechanger for those that work in social care – and those that depend on the hard work and dedication of our members who deliver care services.

UNISON has led the campaign for a National Care Service, and this also featured in the Labour manifesto. The government has since announced an independent

commission into adult social care in England and, while it is positive that the commission is focused on how to deliver a national care service (not whether to), UNISON has been clear that it must work to a strict timeframe and deliver recommendations at the earliest possible opportunity. Care workers, care recipients and their families have already waited far too long for much-needed improvements.

Having a Labour administration in Westminster provides opportunities for dialogue at senior levels of government that have largely been denied us since 2010, but there is no room for complacency. UNISON has continued to press the government to think again on pay for NHS workers, demanding that ministers convene talks with unions and employers on the coming year's pay rise. UNISON has made clear that continuing to rely on the discredited pay review body process is a big mistake, all the more so given how central NHS staff are to the government's key goal of getting the NHS back on its feet.

The government has inherited a financial mess from the Tories, but we have not held back from making the case for proper funding for our starved public services. UNISON has continued to speak out on the need for proper funding to help save local government services that have been ravaged by cuts. And the union was forthright in our criticism of the government's move to restrict the winter fuel allowance, as well as demanding that ministers rethink their decision not to provide compensation for the Women Against State Pension Injustice (WASPI).

UNISON continues to call on the government to come good on its promise to bring about the biggest wave of insourcing in a generation, as well as setting out a clear direction to end outsourcing. The union has taken strong action against privatisation plans in the last year. This includes more than 40 strike days taken by cleaners, porters, housekeepers and other NHS facilities staff at East Suffolk and North Essex Foundation Trust, in opposition to the NHS trust's plans to sell their jobs off to a private contractor, and also the Livv Housing strikers, who have taken sustained action in pursuit of fair pay in Merseyside.

UNISON continues to denounce the mistreatment and abuse of migrant workers. In the past year this has included a particular focus on highlighting the exploitation faced by migrant care workers who have travelled to the UK to help deliver crucial services. Our research uncovered the shocking treatment that many receive at the hands of



unscrupulous employers, which includes being charged thousands in illegal fees, paying extortionate rents for substandard accommodation and being paid at illegal rates to do punishingly long working hours. The union continues to call out these indefensible practices while demanding a major overhaul of the visa sponsorship system that leaves far too much power in the hands of individual care employers.

Despite a short ceasefire in recent months the situation in Gaza remains unbearably bleak, but UNISON has been clear throughout that campaigning must continue. International pressure must be maintained to ensure the deal is fully implemented, hostages are released, and sufficient aid is able to flow into Gaza. More than 48,000 Palestinians have been killed in the last 18 months and more than 110,000 injured, while public services have been almost wiped out. UNISON continues to campaign for a two-state solution and is pressing the UK government to recognise Palestine officially.

Attacks on unions and union members have intensified in many parts of the world in the past year, including pro-democracy campaigners in Hong Kong, where UNISON stood firm in solidarity with those who were arrested. The international picture is particularly uncertain as the world struggles to adapt to the extremes of a second Trump

presidency in the USA. It shows the need for us to stand up to the politics of hate – whether abroad or at home, where the alarming rise of Reform demonstrated that the UK is not immune to the surge in right-wing populism, and the appalling riots in summer 2024 showed that it has never been more important to stand up to racism and prejudice.

The union has announced that 2026 will be UNISON's Year of Green Activity. Tackling climate change is not something that can wait for a more convenient time – we must act now. Our members are constantly dealing with the additional burdens of climate change such as pollution, extreme weather or flooding.

Since 2020, the annual Green UNISON week of activity has brought more attention and focus to how the union can make a difference in public service workplaces and the wider world. And next year we will take this a stage further. Branches are encouraged to get involved in whatever way they can and to watch out for further updates throughout the year.

There are many reasons for our union to face the coming year with confidence and optimism. Not least the fact that for the first time in history UNISON recruited 200,000 members in 2024 alone, achieving a net growth of 40,000 members, and has also significantly strengthened our steward base. Our strength and influence continue to build as we strive to deliver for our members right across the economy and right across the UK. Over the next year UNISON will speak up more powerfully than ever as the voice for public service workers and the communities they serve.

In solidarity,

Christina McAnea
UNISON General Secretary

Chapter one

Speaking up for our members

Pay, Bargaining and Disputes summary

Whilst a quieter year for large national disputes, local disputes continued aplenty and there was huge work across the union to win maximum improvements in pay and conditions for members, with well-argued claims, negotiations, ballots and industrial action all pushing employers to raise offers.

The election of a Labour Government in Westminster changed the industrial relations climate with a promising agenda on workers and trade union rights, but self-imposed financial restrictions have led to public service funding problems, which could store up future trouble.

Largely stable inflation averaging 3.6% followed historical highs in 2022 and 2023. Above inflation settlements and a new government agreeing notable increases in the National Minimum Wage and significant pay review body awards, saw many sectors making inroads into real terms pay decline.

Average public sector pay settlements at 4.6% largely tracked the economy average of 4.5%. The National Minimum Wage finally hit two thirds of average earnings causing upward pressure on low paying sectors and exposing the inadequacy of pay rates in some of our largest bargaining groups, forcing employers into emergency increases to the bottom of scales to stay within the law.

Some pay claims pressed for a reduction in the working week, particularly in Scotland, where the Scottish government's move to a 35-hour week has offered a useful precedent. This led to an agreement for the NHS to complete a move from 37.5 to 36 hours by 1 April 2026.

The 2024/25 pay round also highlighted other major concerns:

- Failure of employers to negotiate in good time, meaning deals reached many months after the scheduled settlement date, leaving staff waiting for an increase.
- Central agreements or "recommendations" not

implemented by local employers.

- Ballots delivering majorities in favour of industrial action, failing to meet the turnout threshold (particularly larger and multi workplace ballots).
- The Westminster Department of Health and Social Care's proposed 2.8% affordability limit (including money for long awaited restructuring) for NHS Agenda for Change staff in England sets alarm bells ringing that pay and delivery of public services could be a challenge for 2025.

Pay settlements

Local government – A £1,290 flat rate increase for staff on **National Joint Council (NJC)** scales (England, Wales and Northern Ireland). The offer was initially rejected and an IA ballot ran. Turnout threshold was not sufficient in enough employers to take action. A new claim and plans for strong, positive campaign for 2025 pay have been submitted.

Scottish Joint Council staff took some industrial action pushing the employer into repeated improvements. The final agreement saw an uplift of £0.67 in the hourly rate or a 3.6% increase (whichever was higher).

The Joint National Council for Chief Officers in England and Wales, accepted an increase of 2.5% on basic pay in July 2024. In Scotland, Chief Officers accepted a 3.6% increase.

Youth and Community Workers in England and Wales, accepted a flat rate increase of £1,290 on all pay points in December 2024.

Food Standards Agency, Ofsted and Care Quality Commission, which are subject to the Civil Service pay remit, settlements of 5% were reached.

National Health Service – the new government announced 5.5% rise following the Pay Review Body (PRB) recommendation. Members voted to settle at the proposed rate. The government also agreed the PRB recommendation for funded NHS Staff Council talks on structural problems within Agenda for Change (AfC).

For 2025 the government announced it would set aside 2.8% to fund the NHS Pay Review Body (NHSPRB) recommendations. But also revealed that ministers would seek to remit restructuring back to the NHSPRB, with costs

out of the 2.8%. UNISON launched a major campaign to highlight the inadequate recommendations and demand direct pay negotiations rather than the PRB.

In Scotland, members accepted 5.5% offer matched the NHSPRB. Negotiations for the 2025 pay round commenced in March.

The Welsh Government announced their intention to apply the full NHSPRB 5.5% recommendation, which was accepted by members so they can move onto pay for 2025/26. The Welsh Government has also confirmed their support for a funded mandate to address structural problems in AfC.

After a concerted joint union political action campaign in Northern Ireland the government committed pay parity and the application of the NHSPRB recommendation, which was eventually backdated.

Police, Probation and Cafcass saw notable increases.

An offer of 4.75% for police staff in England and Wales accepted by members on a large majority.

In Scotland, members rejected the employers offer of a 4.75% increase with a £1,344 underpin for those below £28,296, (lowest rate of £14.26 an hour). An improved offer setting a £15 per hour minimum and underpins to lowest grades from 9.34% to 5% was accepted.

After the National Probation Service rejected a claim to reopen the 2024 three-year settlement, UNISON lodged a trade dispute and successful consultative ballots for industrial action. Following the general election the employer made an improved offer bringing forward an October cost of living rise - worth an extra six months' pay, as well as deleting the lowest pay point in pay band 2, which was accepted by members.

In CAF/CASS, a 4.43% increase was accepted by the vast majority of members.

The higher education employers pay offer of between 5.7% and 2.5% was rejected by members and a disaggregated ballot opened to all branches. Around a third of branches opted out and while a clear majority of those branches that did ballot voted for industrial action, only four passed the 50% turnout threshold. Whilst initially deciding this was not enough to have an impact on further pay negotiations, the

HESGE later decided to allow the four to request industrial action.

In further education, the national employers made a pay "recommendation" of 2.5% or £750, for England, although few colleges follow the national recommendation. Members rejected the offer in a consultation ballot, but not in enough numbers to take further action. The FE & 6th Form Committee has agreed to produce a clear outline of UNISON's vision for the future engagement with the new government and a path to working better for members.

In Cymru/Wales, a 5.5% deal was agreed.

Following a long dispute, including strikes, Scottish FE members accepted a three year offer to deliver: 22/23 £2000; 23/24 £ 1500; 25/25 £1500.

National Sixth Form college employers in England offered 3.5% from September 2024, increasing to 5.5% in April 2025 in FE corporations, and 5.5% from September 2024 in academies, retaining the difference between colleges that are academies and others. The offer also included an addition at the bottom of the scale for both groups. UNISON strongly opposed any offer that is different for staff simply because of the status of the college they work for.

Other key sectors saw average deals worth 5% in energy, 4.4% in water and 5% across voluntary employers. **Energy and water** remain the sectors most likely to see multi-year deals and settlements linked to inflation rates.

A major dispute in **Water, Environment and Transport** at the Passenger Transport Forum (PTF), covered West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA), West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and Transport for Great Manchester (TfGM). The PTF employers offered a flat rate increase of £1,290 on all pay points up to NJC (LG) point 43, and as increase of 2.5% on points above. Following a successful industrial action ballot the employers made an improved offer, which added additional consolidated and non-consolidated lump sum. WMCA and WYCA members accepted the offer, however, TfGM continued their dispute and a further improved offer was achieved.

Social care

UNISON campaigning ensured that Labour included in its 2024 general election manifesto commitments both to building a National Care Service and to establishing the first Fair Pay Agreement (FPA) in adult social care.

The publication of the Employment Rights Bill confirmed government plans to draw up an FPA for the sector by creating a framework for the establishment and implementation of a legally binding agreement that would set out matters relating to pay and other terms and conditions for workers in the adult social care sector. The agreement would be negotiated by an Adult Social Care Negotiating Body (ASCNB) that would be made up of relevant employer and trade union representatives.

UNISON attended numerous meetings with civil servants to address issues around the establishment and composition of the ASCNB, and how the FPA should work in practice. The union is part of the FPA working group convened by the Department of Health and Social Care.

In January 2025 the government announced that Baroness Louise Casey would head up an independent commission into adult social care to produce recommendations on how to create a national care service in England. While welcoming the fact that the commission would focus on how to establish the national care service (rather than whether to), UNISON has continued to emphasize the need for greater urgency.

Building on previous work with the Fabian Society, the union produced a model motion for councils to sign up to as a way of showing their support for a national care service.

Meanwhile, the Scottish Government abandoned its own flawed attempt to bring in a national care service following successful campaigning from UNISON Scotland and others.

In February 2025 UNISON published the findings of a survey of migrant care worker members which further exposed the appalling treatment that far too many are exposed to in the sector. The union called for the sponsorship of migrant care workers to be removed from individual social care employers, who are able to exert excessive power over their employees.

The first meetings of UNISON's national social care committee have now taken place to ensure appropriate member scrutiny and oversight of the union's work on adult social care. These have included sessions held jointly with the GMB at which members have been able to question the Department of Health and Social Care about government plans for the sector.

Living Wage

The Living Wage has continued to form an important target in wage bargaining across the union, particularly where low pay is most heavily concentrated among contractors delivering public services.

The advance of the wage within the economy goes on, with over 15,000 employers now signed up as accredited employers, including over 930 public sector employers. It is also worth noting that this year UNISON implemented a £15 per hour minimum wage for all our directly employed staff.

The gap between the highest National Minimum Wage (NMW) rate and the Living Wage has been diminishing as the NMW climbed to two-thirds of average earnings in 2024, but the Living Wage continues to translate into a salary worth around £750 more for a full-time worker on a 37-hour week.

UNISON developed a fresh set of campaigning materials and bargaining guidance to support branches and regions over Living Wage Week in November, following announcement of the new Living Wage rates.

Numerous breakthroughs have been achieved by local branches to pull members up to the Living Wage and the lessons from a sample of these victories have been added as further case studies for the bargaining guidance.

The cost-of-living crisis emphasised once again the vital importance of minimum pay rates that are linked to inflation, so UNISON's evidence to the Low Pay Commission continued to highlight the Living Wage as part of a drive to achieving minimum pay levels set at £15 an hour. With the Labour government making reference to inflation as an explicit part of the commission's remit, this case may be easier to make.

UNISON has built on the collection of essays on the future of the minimum wage that it published in 2023, highlighting the other dimensions of terms and conditions that hit the low paid hardest, such as inadequate hours and sick pay, and many of these issues have been picked up in the Employment Rights Bill.

Economy and public spending

UNISON has continued to advocate strongly for adequate public service funding throughout 2024-25. We conducted a full analysis of Labour's autumn budget, with detailed briefings published on the UNISON website. The budget represented a decisive break with 14 years of austerity policies. Despite inheriting challenging public finances, it delivered substantial increases in public spending and investment, funded through higher taxes and increased borrowing.

The budget addresses UNISON members' key priorities – tackling the cost-of-living crisis, reviving the NHS, and stimulating economic growth. It places the heaviest burden on the broadest shoulders, leaving income tax, VAT, and employee National Insurance Contributions untouched, while increasing capital gains tax, inheritance tax, taxes on non-doms and private jets, and employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs). Changes to fiscal rules announced in the budget set the UK on a new economic course aimed at boosting growth through reclassification of government borrowing for capital investment and infrastructure.

While welcoming this positive change, UNISON has raised specific concerns about the impact of increased employer NICs. The NHS and councils have received support with this increase, but the situation remains unclear for commissioned services outside core public sectors, particularly social care. UNISON will continue monitoring this situation and intervene where jobs are at risk.

In our submission to the forthcoming spending review, UNISON welcomed its focus on the Plan for Change, emphasising three key areas: the need for additional funding; greater recognition of public service spending's role in generating growth; and avoiding risks to wider Plan for Change objectives when seeking efficiency savings.

Where the government has made cuts to winter fuel

payments and changed eligibility to Personal Independent Payments UNISON has spoken out.

Anti-poverty

Over the past year, UNISON has continued to take action in addressing the cost-of-living crisis and campaigning against poverty in the UK. Our work with partners and allies has remained focused on securing meaningful change for workers and vulnerable communities. Through our continued support for Let's End Poverty, a growing movement of over 80 organisations, we have helped amplify the voices of those most affected by poverty. One of the campaign's key achievements has been the "Dear Prime Minister" campaign, where individuals with lived experience of poverty wrote letters to political leaders, calling for their inclusion in decision-making processes. The campaign culminated in an event at the House of Commons, drawing attention to the need for policies that genuinely address the realities of poverty. This initiative, alongside numerous campaign actions and events, has helped keep poverty at the forefront of political debate, ensuring it remained a key issue as we approached the General Election.

UNISON has called for critical reforms that would directly tackle poverty. We have strongly advocated for the abolition of the two-child benefit limit, which continues to penalise families in poverty, and have pushed for the reinstatement of winter fuel payments, a vital source of support for pensioners facing rising energy costs. These actions are central to our ongoing commitment to protect the most vulnerable members of our society and ensure that financial assistance is distributed fairly.

Measures contained within the Employment Rights Bill, such as guaranteed sick pay for all workers and enhanced job security, will help alleviate poverty. These reforms are particularly crucial for people in precarious, low-paid work, who are most vulnerable to the impact of economic instability. By securing rights for workers, especially those in sectors like social care and other low-paid industries, the Bill will help tackle the root causes of in-work poverty and ensure that people can live with dignity and security.

Housing remains one of the biggest drivers of poverty, and UNISON has continued to call for policies that protect renters from exploitation and housing insecurity. Our work

won the Renters' Rights Bill, which includes measures to ban no-fault evictions and make it illegal for landlords and agents to discriminate against prospective tenants in receipt of benefits or with children, directly links to the fight against poverty. Many renters are already living with challenging finances, and without adequate protections, they risk being forced out of their homes through no fault of their own, which can drive families further into financial hardship. The Renters' Rights Bill, with its emphasis on providing greater security for tenants, will play a key role in reducing the financial strain that renters face.

UNISON's work on these issues has been instrumental in raising awareness and pushing for tangible solutions to address the cost-of-living crisis. While much has been achieved, our commitment to tackling poverty remains unwavering, and we will continue to campaign for policies that ensure everyone in the UK can live a life free from financial insecurity.

Year of LGBT+ workers

The year of LGBT+ workers has been an enormous success – every single region has got involved, held events and prioritised organising LGBT+ workers. And it was a big ask – following on from the year of young workers, year of disabled workers and the year of Black workers, where the bar had been raised so high. With this in mind, LGBT+ members set out some ambitious targets to make our year count.

Here are some of the highlights from the year:

- We've trained over 7,000 UNISON members on how to be a good trans ally through our successful trans ally training programme.
- We've grown our bi+, Black, disabled and trans, non-binary and gender diverse networks by at least 10%, with the trans, non-binary and gender diverse network having over 500 members!
- We have grown the number of LGBT+ branch officers – we have over 50 new LGBT+ branch officers that have stepped up throughout the year. We've had to put on more sessions this year to cope with the demand and for the first time, regions have run this training.
- We are the first trade union in the UK to establish a network for our ace and aromantic members with over 80 members. A new training package has been launched and is being delivered by members of the network.

- And our young LGBT+ member network has grown to over 350 members. We have launched a mentoring programme to encourage young LGBT+ members to become more involved in the self-organised group.
- Over 35 branches completed our LGBT+ policy checklist to assess how their employer's policies ranked against our model inclusion policies. This has allowed us to target those workplaces to make them more inclusive.
- And we have become a more inclusive union from the rule changes that were carried at the 2024 NDC, which were removing gendered language from the rule book and changing the reserved male regional seats on the NEC to general seats, which allows our non-binary and gender diverse members to stand for those positions.

This is just a snapshot of all the successes we've had during our year. All of these highlights have required a mammoth organising effort by members to encourage activism and create more inclusive workplaces for LGBT+ members. Thank you to all members that supported our celebration of the Year of LGBT+ Workers. We have really shown why we are the union for LGBT+ public service workers.

Climate Change policy and campaigns

The NEC Policy Development and Campaigns Committee Climate Change sub-group continues to meet and to determine the broad workplan for progressing UNISON policy in this area.

COP 29 and Engagement with UK Government

Tony Wright (NEC) attended COP29 on UNISON's behalf as one of the 2 TUC members of the ITUC observer delegation to COP29 held from 11th to 29th November in Azerbaijan.

UNISON was invited to a pre-CoP meeting with Minister for Climate Change Kerry McCarthy MP to discuss TU concerns ahead of COP. This was felt to be very productive and a huge change in engagement compared to the previous government.

Tony Wright also approached Ed Miliband MP at COP and was able to engage directly with him – again this bodes well for the UKTU request for inclusion of trade unions in

the formal UK government COP delegation in future. However, trade unions left COP29 deeply disappointed by its inadequate outcomes. The failure to mobilise sufficient climate finance and sidelining of the Just Transition Work Programme undermines efforts to address the climate crisis and protect vulnerable workers and communities.

Similarly, the G20 Leaders' Declaration reaffirmed the 1.5°C target and endorsed voluntary Principles for Just and Inclusive Energy Transitions but lacked concrete commitments to climate finance. The ITUC stresses that ambitious climate action and just transitions for workers must be prioritised.

While the tangible results were disappointing, some gains were made and there is all to play for in the important COP30 in Brazil. UNISON supports the ITUC's ask for a just transition, with worker and community engagement should be built into the UK's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (due to be published in February).

We continue to engage with the UK government requesting a dialogue on non-energy climate policy matters including:

- How trade unions can work together with UK government negotiating teams at the COP processes, to promote the inclusion of Just Transition measures in COP outcomes;
- how trade measures such as Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism can adequately be designed to protect jobs in foundational UK industries while supporting timely decarbonisation;
- The possibility of introducing of Just Transition Commissions (or equivalent) similar to that set up in Scotland which include co-production principles, and particularly worker voice, in the development of Net Zero strategy at national, regional, and local levels;
- legislating to secure facility time for trade union environmental reps in workplaces to enable their contribution to supporting this urgent and vital transition.
- Supporting public sector bodies to meet their Net Zero commitments on time.

Employment Rights Bill

The Employment Rights Bill (ERB) is a wide ranging and ambitious programme of work which will make game-changing improvements to working life in Britain through a raft of new individual and collective rights. The provisions in the ERB did not emerge fully formed on the day the election was announced – it was the product of several years of work leading up to the National Policy Forum process and beyond, influencing and shaping Labour's workplace agenda. UNISON's effective campaigning on the exploitation, poverty pay and insecurity experienced by our members was key to making the case for reform. The union's campaigning in parliament, in our courts and in the workplace highlighted the impact of anti-trade union laws, weak enforcement and an inadequate employment rights framework on ordinary people.

The Bill repeals restrictions on trade union activity including our ability to take strike action and strengthens our rights to access workplaces and organise new members. It strengthens collective bargaining including a reinstatement of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) and sets in place the means to create a fair pay agreement in adult social care. It also addresses other long standing UNISON campaigns – the insecure and exploitative economy in the form of zero-hour contracts and fire and rehire, out-sourcing and weak enforcement.

The Bill contains new individual rights, including strengthened flexible working rights; ending exploitative zero-hours culture; sick pay from day one; bereavement leave widened to close family members; improved pregnancy and maternity rights; increased protection from sexual harassment, strengthened unfair dismissal rights; introduction of gender and menopause action plans and new 'day one' rights to parental and paternity leave.

Collective rights to help UNISON support members include access rights to workplaces for recruitment and collective bargaining purposes, including digital access; union recognition made less onerous and thresholds reduced; improvements to facility time so reps can better represent members; improved collective redundancy provisions; extension of the time limit to bring employment tribunal claims from three to six months; repeal of the Strikes Act (2023) and the Trade Union Act (2016); simpler and less onerous industrial action processes; protections from detriments and unfair dismissal for taking industrial action;

and a new Fair Work Agency to help enforce rights and resolve disputes.

There are also plans for improving pay and terms on a large scale – an Adult Social Care Negotiating Body to deliver a Fair Pay Agreement for care workers (in England at first) and new School Support Staff Negotiating Body (in England at first). There will also be a restoration of the two-tier workforce code to stop outsourcing driving down pay and terms.

UNISON regards the Employment Rights Bill not as the destination but the beginning of our work. The union has been engaged in every part of the process in shaping the debate during parliamentary stages and in discussions with civil servants. We have also been campaigning with the TUC and affiliate unions to challenge right wing attacks on the bill. UNISON will continue our campaign and lobby and mobilise our members to ensure that promises are fulfilled and opportunities are seized to transform the UK's labour market, tackle injustices and empower workers. The staff, member and activist engagement on the Bill is being run under the “Better life at work” strap line.

AI and digitalisation

UNISON has continued to make AI and digitalisation a key area of policy and campaigning as the technology rapidly develops, organisations increasingly implement these systems, and the government pursues an active strategy of boosting the AI sector and digitalising public services. In 2024, we carried out a comprehensive mapping exercise across UNISON staff through a survey gathering information on current AI issues and activities, following up areas of activity and awareness with appropriate support.

In November 2024, UNISON responded to a pre-consultation information exercise with the Department of Business and Trade (DBT) on Labour's election commitment in 'Make Work Pay' to require any employer planning to use surveillance technology to consult with staff or their union representatives. UNISON submitted a full response, grounded in the experiences of members reported across service groups and regions. Civil servants from DBT reached out to UNISON, requesting early input into the government's proposals in the Plan to Make Work Pay in relation to emerging technologies in the workplace. This

early, informal consultation precedes a formal public consultation expected to launch towards the end of the year. UNISON plans to engage with this consultation, both as an individual union and in joint work with the TUC and other relevant unions. The UNISON response emphasised the need for increased governance, meaningful consultation and strengthened worker rights.

Throughout the year, we have worked with service groups and other career groups throughout the union to begin specialist AI policy projects in specific professions. This has involved a period of awareness raising and engagement across the union, culminating in a growing portfolio of work in specific professions represented by the union, with plans to expand this work in 2025.

UNISON continues to be an active participant in the TUC's working group on AI, representing our members alongside other unions. Additionally, we have joined a new TUC-facilitated group focused specifically on AI in public services launched in 2025, in which UNISON will play a very active role.

The most significant development has been the launch in March 2025 of a member and activist resource on the UNISON website – the AI Hub. Based on all previous engagement work, this resource is designed to reflect the current needs, concerns, and questions of UNISON membership relating to AI. The Hub fulfils 2024's motion 18's call for briefings and materials for members on AI in the workplace. The AI Hub will be an ongoing project, constantly updated and developed as technology and circumstances evolve.

International

UNISON is affiliated to both Public Services International and the European federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU). Christina McAnea attended the 69th annual United Nations Committee on the Status of Women in New York as part of the PSI delegation where she spoke at a number of events and emphasised the essential role of the public sector in advancing women's economic rights and equality. She also took part in a global union march and rally with the theme 'No to backlash against women's rights'. At the rally, she reaffirmed UNISON's solidarity with the US trade union movement which has come under attack from the Trump Administration. UNISON had a delegation to the 11th

congress of in Bucharest, Romania in June 2024. Liz Snape was elected as one of the EPSU Vice Presidents, Gloria Mills is chair of EPSU's Women's and Gender Equality Committee and Donna Rowe-Merriman is chair of the Public Utilities Standing Committee.

UNISON's International Committee has set out the key international priorities for the union for 2024-25: Palestine; Colombia; Business and Human Rights; Türkiye; and Public Services in the Global South.

Christina McAnea visited Palestine in 2024 as part of an international trade union delegation and met David Lammy, the Foreign Secretary to set out our demands. UNISON continues to call for a permanent ceasefire, including the fragile ceasefire which came into effect in January 2025 in Gaza, access to humanitarian assistance, the safe release of hostages and an end to the blockade. We continue to call on the UK Government to recognise Palestine as a contribution to a two-state solution. We have also supported and provided speakers for many of the national demonstrations organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and promoted the workplace days of action. UNISON has supported branches to call on the LGPS to divest from companies on the UN list of business enterprises involved in the illegal settlements and companies which continue to sell arms used in violations of international law.

Despite the election of President Petro in 2022 and his policies of Total Peace and social and economic reforms, Colombia remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a trade unionist or social and environmental activist. UNISON continues to support Justice for Colombia, which is solely funded by the British and Irish trade unions, in its work highlighting the situation in Colombia.

Trade unionists in Türkiye continued to be attacked, with more charged with alleged terrorism offences for defending workers' rights. UNISON continues to campaign for the acquittal of our colleagues, including monitoring and observing trials. We are also supporting trade union demands for peace, democracy and rights through project work, campaigning and resources for branches.

UNISON is pushing the government at every opportunity to fulfil Labour's commitment to "assess the best way to prevent environmental harms, modern slavery and human and labour rights abuses in both private and public sector

supply chains including effective due diligence rules". After receiving a legal opinion from Jason Coppel KC, the public procurement part of our campaign for a Business, Human Rights and Environment Act is developing well and we are at the centre of advocacy to ensure UK solar energy is free of forced labour. Ground-breaking work on developing workers guidance on "principles for worker-driven remedy" is under development through consultations with electronics trade unions in Southeast Asia.

As an alternative to the Government's agenda promoting and investing tax-payers money in the privatisation of public services around the world, we are advocating for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to create a Unit for Quality Public Services.

UNISON's International Development Fund (UIDF) continues to allow us to support projects with trade unions around the world including Palestine, Zimbabwe, Costa Rica, Malaysia and Kenya.

Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI)

Changes to pension law in 1995 and 2011 delayed the State Pension Age for 1950's born women by up to 6 years. Many received information about the change with just one year's notice. Some received no notification. An estimated 3.8 million women waited up to six years longer to receive the state pension.

UNISON was the first union to support the cause of pension justice for 1950's born women and has supported thousands of women with individual claims for compensation as well as campaigning alongside women in the WASPI (Women Against State Pension Injustice) organisation, since it was set up in 2015. UNISON also works with other groups supporting 1950's born women including Back to 60.

On 23 March 2024, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman reported that the Department of Work and Pensions had failed to communicate the changes adequately and recommended that Parliament should make things right by providing compensation of amounts between £1,000 and £2,900. UNISON supported WASPI's call for the urgent vote in Parliament required to implement the compensation. On

17 December 2024 the Labour government rejected the recommendation of the Ombudsman with the minister for work and pensions, Liz Kendall, stating that there was no evidence of 'direct financial loss' and no financial compensation pay-out would be made to the WASPI women.

UNISON responded immediately with a statement that the decision not to pay the compensation recommended by the Ombudsman was a cruel blow, particularly as it came on top of the withdrawal of the Winter Fuel Allowance to all but a handful of pensioners. We also said that the argument that the women 'should have known about the change' showed a lack of sympathy at best, at worst it showed hostility and contempt for working class women. UNISON's campaign is far from over and discussions with WASPI about next steps continue. UNISON has signed a joint letter (in March), in the run up to the Spring Statement, to the Prime Minister calling on him to reverse the decision not to make a financial pay out.

At the same time UNISON is encouraging retired members to check whether they are entitled to pension credits and get the benefits they are entitled to by using the benefits calculator provided by the union's welfare charity, There for You.

Migrant workers and refugees

UNISON's campaigning work on immigration and our advocacy for the rights of migrant workers has intensified due to the rise in 2021-2023 of overseas recruitment in the Health and Social care sector. UNISON has worked to ensure that our branches and regions are supported in responding to the issues faced by our members as well as taking the lead nationally on campaigning and advocacy. As trade union, UNISON's most powerful campaign for migrant worker rights will focus on core workplace rights. However, we also advocate and campaign on issues which affect migrant workers and their families beyond the workplace. This wider work is supported by the union's Campaign Fund and enables UNISON's campaigns for a rights based, humane immigration policy and the dismantling of the hostile environment.

UNISON has increasing numbers of migrant workers becoming active in the union as workplace reps, on our

National Social Care Committee (England) and on equivalent bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Increasing representation has enabled our migrant worker members to set the bargaining agenda at workplace level and our campaigning agenda at national level. This has seen activity across all UNISON regions ranging from migrant worker charters, campaigns aimed at local authorities, MPs, MSPs, Assembly members and Westminster and national governments. These campaigns have responded to the voices and experiences of our members and the challenges they have experienced in the UK.

This has been underpinned by increased resources targeted at immigration advice and follow up casework support for UNISON migrant worker members. Work is also being undertaken to monitor the issues most commonly experienced by our migrant worker members across workplaces, sectors, job roles and regions. Initial findings have led to resources being developed to support branches in representing, negotiating and organising migrant workers as part of the core trade union agenda, with specialist immigration advice and support available as needed.

Exploitation of migrant workers

Migrant workers are left exposed by our employment rights framework and targeted by hostile immigration rules. They are uniquely vulnerable to unscrupulous employers. In the social care sector this has been compounded by weak enforcement, a tolerance for rule breaking by some employers and punitive visa rules.

Care workers hired from overseas have had money deducted from their wages to cover dubious and fictitious fees, faced demands to repay thousands of pounds when they try to move jobs, and forced to pay extortionate rents for substandard accommodation. Before they can even travel to the UK, many must go through predatory recruitment agents who demand excessive payment for their services. Some migrant job-seekers sell all they own to pay these 'relocation' costs.

Campaign to reform visa sponsorship in social care

The sponsorship relationship with the employer is particularly harmful in the social care sector. Care is one of the most precarious sectors in the UK. Firms regularly go under or lose their council contracts. The consequence is staff find themselves without work and in financial hardship.

For migrant care workers, the situation is even worse. Workers are fearful of raising concerns about employment practices when the same employers can remove their visa sponsorship. Unscrupulous employers are using the threat of removal to a care worker's home country to victimise migrant workers who whistle blow/complain about their treatment.

Overseas staff can also become trapped in an exploitative workplace if employers withhold job references. Punitive measures such as these are often used to force compliance with bad working practices, often in clear breach of the law. The visa sponsorship relationship with employers has also undermined enforcement activity against bad employers. When the Home Office revokes employers' licences to sponsor overseas workers, it leaves the workers stranded and facing deportation and the employers free to keep operating.

UNISON has launched a new campaign to reform visa sponsorship in the social care sector, with a move to a visa which covers the whole sector. Rather than being linked to individual employers, it would enable workers to move employers more easily, ensuring that exploitative employers cannot tie workers to them using threats.

Justice for the Windrush Generation

Campaigning for justice for the Windrush generation continues to be a key priority. UNISON was extremely disappointed that the then Home Secretary Suella Braverman decided in January 2023 not to proceed with three key recommendations made by independent reviewer, Wendy Williams in her 'Lessons learned' Review. As a result of a legal challenge by UNISON and others, the High Court ruled that Suella Braverman was "not justified" in breaking promises to create a migrants' commissioner and boost the powers of the chief inspector for borders and immigration. The judge said Ms Braverman failed to consult properly and could not justify the discriminatory impact upon Windrush victims. The judge also said the then home secretary failed

to comply with the public sector equality duty*, given the "adverse impact on migrants and future migrants more generally". The new Labour Government has announced that the Windrush unit in the Home Office would be reinstated and a new 'Windrush Commissioner' would be appointed.

Asylum seekers and refugees

UNISON continues to campaign for a fair and humane refugee system, urging the UK to live up to its international humanitarian obligations. The union welcomed the scrapping of the Rwanda scheme by the new Government and the proposed repeal of some of the worst elements of the previous Governments 'Nationality and Borders Act' and 'Illegal Migration Act'. UNISON has urged the new government to rethink its plans to treat refugees as second-class citizens in the UK and will continue our long-standing campaign for refugee rights. This includes the publication of "Safe Haven: a guide for social workers supporting refugee children in England" in Autumn 2024. An equivalent guide for Wales is due in Summer 2025.

Insourcing and procurement

The union has continued to fight outsourcing and campaign for services to be brought back in-house. In addition, the union has been able to engage with the Labour Party and the new government on a range of new policies related to this agenda. Engagement through party policy making processes resulted in commitments included in the Make Work Pay document for the biggest wave of insourcing in a generation and an end to the Tories ideological drive to privatise public services. These statements were accompanied by a range of policy statements – including the commitment to introduce a public interest test before outsourcing can take place and when contracts come up for renewal. The first fruits of this new approach are the inclusion of a new statutory Two-Tier Code in the Employment Rights Bill and the inclusion of the public interest test in the National Procurement Policy Statement. At the time of writing the union anticipates a string of consultations on how these new measures will operate in practice.

ESNEFT dispute

Work continues between UNISON Centre and the union's regions and branches to oppose outsourcing and privatisation in the NHS. In the past year much of this has focused on resisting the outsourcing of workers at East Suffolk and North Essex Foundation Trust (ESNEFT).

Cleaners, porters, housekeepers and other NHS facilities staff have taken more than 40 strike days since August 2024 to try to stop the trust's plans to sell their jobs out of the NHS to a private contractor.

The strike action was complemented by wider union media and political action, including the commissioning of an analysis and critique of the trust's flawed case for change.

Similar work has taken place to support UNISON South West in their work to resist the awarding of a large community services contract to private operator HCRG by Bath, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board.

Covid 19 Public Inquiry

UNISON, along with other unions, has continued to work through the TUC to submit evidence to the ongoing UK Public Inquiry into Covid 19. The Inquiry is expected to conclude its public hearings in 2026. It has a modular structure, with different modules covering specific topics or sectors. A major focus over the last year has been module 3, which is looking at the impact of the pandemic on the NHS – and how it responded.

Evidence that UNISON submitted, in both a written witness statement and orally at the public hearings, has sought to demonstrate that the ability of the NHS to respond was significantly damaged by austerity in the 10 years before 2020, market based reforms, inadequate stock and management of PPE, failures to address the staffing crisis across health and social care.

UNISON has also sought to demonstrate that deteriorating health inequalities and structural racism were a key explanation for the way in which the pandemic had a disproportionate impact on Black workers and others with protected characteristics.

UNISON and the TUC jointly organised an event for Black workers in September 2024 with Baroness Lawrence.

The purpose of the event was to discuss the public inquiry and to ensure that the experience of Black workers in the healthcare sector is heard and acted upon by the Inquiry. The start point for the event was the surveys and research that UNISON and other unions conducted during the pandemic. This showed that people working in the NHS encountered huge pressures and anxiety during the pandemic – but that Black workers faced:

- a higher risk of infection and severe disease for Black, Asian and ethnic minority healthcare workers.
- a potential (although the subject of ongoing research) higher risk of suffering Long Covid
- higher likelihood of being redeployed into frontline roles and roles which involved higher risk of Covid-19 infection (e.g. in 'red zones').
- a higher propensity to being in roles where appropriate, meaningful risk assessments were not conducted and where there was no adequate sick pay – e.g. outsourced workers, amongst whom Black workers are overrepresented
- a greater risk of working in hazardous situations with inadequate PPE.

Baroness Lawrence reflected on the piece of work that she undertook for Keir Starmer at the start of his leadership of the Labour Party on the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on Black workers. She also talked about the role that public inquiries can play in leading to change.

The event captured testimonies, experiences and ideas for recommendations that were subsequently fed into the inquiry. Although the focus was module 3, the invitation was opened out to members from other sectors, in anticipation of coverage in later modules.

Written evidence has also been submitted over recent months to the modules looking at social care, education, the economic policy response and societal impacts (including key workers). Public hearings for these modules will likely have concluded over the next year. A key priority now is to engage with the government around the implementation of the inquiry's recommendations.

Housing

Housing remains a campaigning priority for our union. Over the past year, we have vigorously amplified the voices of our members before parliamentarians and policymakers and called for urgent reforms to address the housing crisis for the benefit of all workers and citizens.

UNISON actively lobbied to ensure housing was prioritised within Labour's manifesto. Following the Summer 2024 general election, UNISON welcomed the Labour government's initial commitments to tackle the housing crisis, particularly the critical shortage of social and genuinely affordable housing, and the rental crisis that disproportionately impacts our privately renting members, the majority of whom are women. These issues, long neglected by the previous administration, required immediate action. We endorsed the government's plans to construct a new generation of council, social and genuinely affordable housing, utilising brownfield sites and implementing ambitious house-building targets to boost supply and stimulate economic growth. These measures align with UNISON's longstanding policy demands to improve housing provision.

However, while these plans are a positive step, further clarity is needed regarding both funding and the workforce required for their effective implementation. UNISON continues to engage constructively with the new government to call for the funding and reforms needed to address the housing crisis. We recently held a productive meeting with Baroness Taylor, Housing Minister, in March 2025, to discuss these issues.

UNISON has actively engaged with national and government consultations, including our submission to the forthcoming Spending Review. This highlighted the profound impact of the housing crisis on our members, the public sector workforce, and essential services, contributing to a recruitment and retention crisis. We called for substantial, long-term, and sustainable funding to enable councils and social housing providers to build and maintain homes to meet demand.

Furthermore, we responded to the government's Right to Buy consultation, and made the case for the expansion of council housing. We highlighted that the policy has drastically depleted council housing stock, exacerbated homelessness and waiting lists, and severely strained

council budgets. We called for granting councils autonomous decision-making power over their housing stock investments and urged the government to strengthen their reforms by abolishing the Right to Buy in England in line with Scotland and Wales. We maintained that mere restrictions or reduced discounts are insufficient to address the policy's inherent flaws.

UNISON collaborated with Generation Rent in 2024 to conduct a series of roundtable events. These in-depth discussions with our privately renting members provided invaluable firsthand accounts of their experiences and challenges. The insights gathered formed the foundation of our influential report, "The Private Rental Crisis – Voices from the Frontline," published last summer. The report, which received significant media coverage, including national publications and online platforms, and was widely disseminated to MPs and policymakers, exposed the harsh realities of the private rental market. It highlighted issues such as escalating rents, insecure tenancies, substandard living conditions, and exploitative landlord practices. The report also offered policy recommendations, which have directly shaped our lobbying efforts and contributed to the ongoing debate on rental reform.

Earlier this year, UNISON disseminated a briefing ahead of a key House of Lords debate on private rental affordability. This outlined our demands for improving housing supply and affordability, which were incorporated into a speech by Lord Campbell-Savours during the debate, and received explicit acknowledgement from Baroness Taylor, Housing Minister. This initiative has significantly elevated our profile as a prominent housing campaign union.

UNISON welcomed the Renters' Rights Bill, a victory secured through our sustained campaigning, as a significant step forward. This Bill, which will ban Section 21 no-fault evictions, introduce indefinite tenancies, and implement other key measures, will significantly enhance tenant rights, protections, and security, empowering tenants to challenge exploitative practices, unreasonable rent increases, and substandard living conditions.

Our engagement with Parliament on the Bill has been both extensive and influential. Through detailed briefings at key legislative stages, UNISON articulated its policy positions, shared the lived experiences of our members, and proposed amendments to strengthen the Bill. This collaborative approach with parliamentarians across the political

spectrum, including direct meetings with MPs, Peers, and Ministers, yielded significant victories, notably the ban on excessive rent payments in advance, capping them at one month and alleviating financial burdens on tenants. UNISON's campaigning efforts and our role in securing this amendment were acknowledged in the media. UNISON now urges the government to regulate runaway rents which are placing an immense financial strain on tenants; and to resource councils for effective enforcement, warning that without this support, the Bill's aims are jeopardised. UNISON will continue to monitor the Bill's implementation and work with policymakers to ensure it delivers real, tangible benefits for tenants.

Building on this momentum, UNISON remains committed in its pursuit of a fair housing system for all. This commitment is further demonstrated by our 'Firm Foundations' editorial series, launched in December 2024. This examines the implications of the housing crisis and sets out UNISON's vision to tackle it for the betterment of all citizens.

Equality

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

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

As part of delivering UNISON's Organising to Win Strategy, the Equality and Strategic Organising Units have developed an Impact Assessment Framework to measure success in linking organising aims and equality objectives reinforcing that equality is very much UNISON business.

Women Members

Over 80% of UNISON members are women. We continue to explore ways to engage women in activism in the union at all levels. During the last year, we worked with Learning and Organising Services (LAOS) to merge the 'confidence for women' and 'assertiveness for women' training courses into a pathway to be delivered by the regions. This training course was promoted to branch and regional women's group.

Women's health and safety is important – whether it is advising on maternity rights, childcare, menopause, women's safety equipment or areas where there is a traditional bias towards female working, yet the gender balance of Health and Safety representatives in UNISON does not reflect the gender balance of our union. We sign posted the page on the UNISON website that explains the role of a health and safety officer and how to become one to women members. We constantly look for new ways to promote the role to our women members, nationally and locally.

National Women's Committee is very conscious of the impact of the cost-of-living, particularly on women. Women's incomes are generally lower, which leaves them more vulnerable to short term financial problems, in turn making them more likely to rely on borrowing and debt to make ends meet. Over three million people have turned to illegal money lenders (loan Sharks) as the cost of living continues to bite.

UNISON services and confidential debt advice, use of credit unions or Employer lending Schemes were promoted and sign posted to women in regions and branches.

A UNISON research report, “Through the Roof”, highlighted that women are disproportionately affected by the housing crisis. Many of the women who participated in the research are on low pay and are struggling to afford rising rents, housing and living costs. The report highlights the gender pay disparity between men and women. It shows that the rapid rise in housing costs, especially rents, combined with low pay, means that women are most at risk of poverty. As a result, many are struggling to manage financially, and are cutting back on food and essentials.

UNISON will continue to raise issues around affordability, security and accessibility impacting our members who are at the sharp end of the housing crisis and call for solutions to them. Our campaign recognises that those most impacted by the housing crisis are women, Black and young workers. UNISON’s research report was promoted to all women in UNISON.

Over 1 million women are at risk of gambling because of the easy access to online casino and bingo sites on smartphones and other electronic devices. There is a lack of awareness, support and help for these women as the services available are just not there or tend to be tailored for men.

To promote health and wellbeing of our women members and to make them aware of the harm of gambling, UNISON has a dedicated webpage on debt advice where members can get a free debt advice service. The UNISON Debt line is run by our partner organisation, PayPlan. The service offers free, confidential debt advice to help members on the road to becoming debt-free.

The UNISON debt line service was signposted to women members and leaflets and fact sheets around illegal money lenders produced by our partner organisation, PayPlan were also circulated to them.

A workshop on the harm caused by gambling also took place at the 2025 women’s conference.

Violence against women is a major human rights violation. Women should be able to live without the fear of violence in the workplace, home or in the society. However, many

women and children are stuck in abusive situations because refuge spaces have been cut.

The proliferation of misogyny online continues to increase, which has a terrible impact on women and girls. Most of the abuse that occurs now features “some sort of cyber element”.

UNISON has published guidance on domestic abuse and on ‘ending violence against women and girls.’ There are sections on ‘online and digital abuse’ and ‘honour-based violence.’ A webinar on Violence in the workplace took place on 25 November 2024 to coincide with the United Nations International Day to End Violence Against Women and Girls.

UNISON continues to push for government action on violence against workers who face greater risks, including women and LGBT+ workers. UNISON wants to see more done to prevent violence rather than dealing with the consequences.

On average, men earn 14% more than women in the UK. Despite the introduction of mandatory gender pay gap reporting in 2017, women are still paid less on average than men.

More women than men work part-time; more women than men take on the caring responsibilities within their families. But the lack of good quality, decently paid part-time work alongside the lack of affordable childcare continue to exacerbate the issue for women and the continuing gender pay imbalance.

UNISON has relaunched its campaign to BridgeTheGap by revamping the dedicated Bridge the gap page on the UNISON website. The link to this page was circulated to women in UNISON.

The closing the gender pay gap workshop has been updated by LAOS and the UNISON bargaining guide on the gender pay gap has also been updated.

The UK has one of the lowest maternal mortality ratios in the world. There are, however, glaring, and persistent disparities in outcomes for women depending on their ethnicity. Maternal mortality for Black women is currently almost four times higher than for white women.

UNISON continues to campaign with Maternity Action to

protect and improve maternity care and support for all women regardless of race. An event focussing specifically on the situation of migrant and asylum-seeking women was organised by Maternity Action as part of a project with UNISON.

UNISON believes that Trans people should always be protected from discrimination and harassment. All transgender people have the right to equal treatment, protection from discrimination and the full support of the union. UNISON is committed to working for trans equality in the workplace, in society, under the law and in our union.

The national women's committee helped to promote resources promoting equality for trans people. National women's committee members have also worked hard in their regions to promote trans allies and have supported trans ally training.

UNISON believes that employers should take women's concerns and issues very important. Women having control over their own bodies is central to achieving women's equality, and UNISON is committed to campaigning to ensure that women have all the information they need to make choices about their health and well-being.

Raising awareness of some of the health issues that women can face among both employers and employees is a crucial step for ensuring that policies such as capability and sickness absence are fair. To achieve this, UNISON has produced an information sheet on 'women's health issues: raising awareness'. This is available on the women's site of the UNISON website.

An updated version of the "Menopause is a workplace issue" guide has also been produced. This is a comprehensive guide for staff and branch activists designed to assist branches in ensuring that organisations consider how menopause symptoms can impact on workers experiencing the menopause. There is a dedicated webpage on menopause where members can obtain more information about the menopause.

Sexual harassment is still rampant in our workplaces and society and UNISON believes that sexual harassment of any type should not be tolerated in the workplace.

UNISON worked together with the TUC and other civil society organisations to support new legislation to tackle

sexual harassment. The Worker Protection Act introduces a new proactive obligation on employers to take preventative steps to eliminate workplace sexual harassment. This was passed in 2023 and came into force on 26 October 2024.

UNISON will continue to campaign to strengthen the law on sexual harassment in the workplace further to ensure everyone is protected and has access to justice.

Black Members

At the core of UNISON's National Black Members Committee (NBMC) work is a commitment to fostering inclusivity, driving meaningful change, and challenging racism in the workplace and broader society.

UNISON recognises the invaluable contributions of Black workers across all sectors of the union. Building on the legacy of the Year of Black Workers 2023, we continue our efforts to advocate for Black workers' rights and ensure their voices are heard at all levels.

One of our flagship campaigns is addressing the Ethnicity Pay Gap. We have consistently advocated for mandatory reporting, which would enable us to see the scale of the problem and start to address it. The Ethnicity Pay Gap is a stark indicator of racial inequality, contributing to broader disparities in wealth and opportunity that impact individuals, families, and the wider economy.

To support this work, we developed an Ethnicity Pay Gap Toolkit, available at Ethnicity Pay Gap Toolkit, designed to assist our activists persuade employers of the benefits of annual reporting and accountability measures. Our motion on this issue received overwhelming backing at the TUC Congress, where UNISON also participated in a dedicated fringe event.

The NBMC welcomes the Labour government's commitment to making Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting mandatory in the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill. This marks a significant milestone in advancing racial equality in the workplace.

Another key initiative, developed during the Year of Black Workers in 2023, which NBMC continues to champion, is the Anti-Racism Charter, available at Anti-Racism Charter. This charter provides branches with a framework to take practical steps toward reducing racial disparities including a

structured review of progress over 12 months to ensure significant workplace changes are implemented. Many more employers across the sectors in which UNISON negotiates signed up to the charter this year.

In collaboration with LAOS and regional education teams, UNISON has hosted numerous training events focusing on addressing racial inequalities in disciplinary processes, tackling bullying and harassment, and eliminating bias in recruitment.

The NBMC was also pleased to facilitate a workshop at the 2024 National Black Members Conference, titled “2024 LGBT+ Black Engagement: Being a Trans Ally,” as part of the Year of LGBT+ Workers campaign.

The UNISON Race Discrimination Inquiry Report 2024 was completed in November 2024. The inquiry was set up in response to the increasing number of complaints regarding the handling of race discrimination cases within UNISON. This led the NBMC to call for a formal inquiry into racism and racial discrimination cases and the implementation of legal representation for affected members.

Sponsored by the General Secretary and endorsed by the Committee, President, and NEC, the inquiry panel has conducted extensive reviews and consultations with Black members. The final report was presented to the NEC in early December 2024, with an action plan set for implementation following the National Black Members Conference now taking place in May 2025.

UNISON remains committed to ensuring that this report drives change. General Secretary Christina McAnea stated, “The report reflects our values and serves as a roadmap for meaningful reform.” Implementation of its recommendations will commence later this year, following the rescheduled National Black Members Conference, ensuring full engagement and accountability.

Beyond the workplace, the NBMC actively participates in wider anti-racism movements. Our collaboration with Stand Up to Racism and participation in national demonstrations reflect our solidarity in the fight against racism. Additionally, our work with Show Racism the Red Card reinforces our dedication to education, campaigning, and providing resources to challenge racial disparities.

Our Black History Month initiatives, including social media

campaigns celebrating South Asian Heritage, participation in the Notting Hill Carnival, and hosting the National Black History event, underscore our commitment to recognising Black contributions and raising awareness about the ongoing struggle for racial justice.

Furthermore, our continued support for the ‘About Zane’ Campaign highlights our advocacy against environmental racism. We are proud that UNISON will honour Zane’s parents with an Honorary Membership Award at the NDC in June.

UNISON and the NBMC remain steadfast in our fight for racial equality. From the workplace to broader society, we work in collaboration with branches, regions, and service groups to amplify Black voices and dismantle systems that perpetuate inequality. Through collective action, we will continue to push for substantial and lasting change.

Disabled Members

This year, the National Disabled Members Committee has continued to build on the achievements of UNISON’s Year of Disabled Workers in 2022 - helping achieve positive changes in the workplace that make a difference to the working lives of disabled people and ensuring the voices of disabled members are listened to and acted upon in our union.

We have also sought to influence positive changes for disabled people in wider society.

We have encouraged branches to work on the three themes of our 2022 campaign, which remain relevant and important - negotiating disability policies, electing, and training disability reps, and backing the groundbreaking Disability Employment Charter campaign.

With an estimated 200,000 disabled members in UNISON, it is every branch’s responsibility to organise, bargain and campaign on disability equality. From Energy and WET to Local Government, and from Community to Health, we saw new Reasonable Adjustment Passports and Disability Leave policies achieved during the year thanks to the hard work of branch negotiators. We would have liked to have seen greater sign-up to the Disability Employment Charter and this is a key priority for 2025.

More branches elected and trained branch disabled members officers and sent them on our regular online disability officers training. We built on this training to deliver a stage 2 course for those who have already undertaken the disability officers training. This second stage focuses on organising. We delivered online training sessions explaining how to apply to Access to Work; these sessions are complemented by our comprehensive Members Guide to Access to Work which can be ordered from the online catalogue.

We worked with UNISON's Labour Link to successfully lobby the Labour Party to include important commitments on disability pay gap monitoring and a simpler and quicker process for reasonable adjustments in their agreed policy programme running into the General Election. We are now delighted to be working with a Labour Government to introduce mandatory disability pay gap reporting as set out in the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill published in March 2025.

However, UNISON is very concerned about plans to reform welfare and disability benefits, including tightening the eligibility criteria for the personal independence payment (PIP), and the likely impact on disabled workers. UNISON's view is that significantly tightening the rules to make it harder to claim personal independence payments is a false economy, and that rather than help disabled people stay in their jobs, the plans of the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions could have the opposite effect. The National Disabled Members Committee is leading in shaping UNISON's response to the government's consultation on the proposed reforms.

Internally, UNISON continues to campaign for and work on issues to achieve positive outcomes for disabled members, including the roll out of reasonable adjustments passports. The Online Conference System (OCS) can now store the data that people input for reasonable adjustments for conferences, so that we do not have to keep providing the same information repeatedly. However, our aim is still to have the passports used across the union nationally, for all conferences and meetings.

LGBT+ Members

2024 was a huge year for the LGBT+ self-organised group. The support received for our Year of LGBT+ workers was overwhelming and our achievements throughout the year

are highlighted under the 'Year of LGBT+ workers' section of this report.

Our work on ace and aromantic (aro) identities has been leading the way in the trade union movement, being the first UK trade union to set up a network of ace and aro members. We look forward to continuing this work and to improve the rights of ace and aro workers.

Our trans equality work has been enormously successful, led by our network co-convenors Danny and Robyn. We are still struggling to keep up with the demand of running trans ally training. Over 80 members of the trans, non-binary and gender diverse network are trained to deliver this training to regions and branches.

We are continuing to focus on building activism of our young LGBT+ members through our young LGBT+ member network. We were pleased to see that there were more young members than ever at our LGBT+ conference in November, doubling the numbers from the previous year. We continue to roll out mentoring training with national committee members to encourage more young LGBT+ members fill leadership positions within the union.

We have also continued our work internationally. Penny Smith became the co-chair of the ILGA Europe board. At the ILGA Europe conference in October, UNISON was well represented, with many regions sending their own delegations. We were also represented at the ILGA World conference, where we helped to lead the trade union pre-conference event, with Michael Craig and Jennie Antonio were presenters at the event and showcasing why UNISON is a leader for LGBT+ equality. Darienne Flemington was again selected for the chairing pool.

We have also continued to work with Public Services International and the LGBT+ project with the Global Unions, working with our sibling unions in Europe and Latin America to ensure PSI is a leader when it comes to advocating for LGBT+ workers internationally.

UNISON's amendment to the EPSU's programme of action at their congress in June has paved the way for EPSU to establish a LGBT+ network, which UNISON has taken a leading role in. Darienne Flemington was elected through the EPSU LGBT+ network to represent Europe on the PSI LGBT+ steering group. UNISON has hosted the first in-person meeting of this network.

Young Members

Young members continue to be a growth area for UNISON – and we're beginning to see the impact of the 2023 rule change which extended the age limit upwards for young members, with more people getting active and involved in their branches and regions.

In 2024 we launched our campaign Young Members Mental Health Matters! Accompanied by a video made with young members and materials for use in branches and workplaces, this campaign aimed to promote the things that UNISON can do to make workplaces more mentally healthy, including supporting members, identifying health and safety hazards which affect mental health, and bargaining for better terms and conditions in the workplace. As part of our campaign, we also called for a Right to Disconnect – a right not to take work-related calls and messages outside of the working day – which the Labour government committed to implementing.

We ran a well-received webinar series introducing new young members to UNISON, starting with an introduction to how UNISON works called 'Help! I've just joined UNISON!' followed by introductions to writing motions and attending conferences. All the webinars were chaired and presented by young members, with plans for more in the future.

Equality continues to be a key priority for young members and the young LGBT+ and young Black members networks have gone from strength to strength. These are informal ways for young members to network and discuss the issues that matter to them – and open to all young members who wish to attend.

We continue to update young members with our email newsletter, which goes out quarterly to over 100,000 young members with updates on campaigning, surveys, education and opportunities to get more involved and active.

Retired Members

Poverty for pensioners remains a key equality issue for UNISON's 170,000 retired members, many of whom have worked in low-paid jobs for a large part of, if not all their working lives. Costs of living continue to rise exacerbating poverty and related mental and physical ill health.

The key campaigns for UNISON's National Retired Members Committee (NRMC) this year continue to be persuading the

Labour government to reverse the decision to restrict the winter fuel allowance, and demanding that the government pays compensation to women born in the 1950's (WASPI women), who were affected so unfairly by an unexpected rise in pension age.

UNISON has worked alongside WASPI to raise the issue of compensation in the media and to lobby parliamentarians – reported on in full elsewhere in this report. UNISON has also provided information on the website and through our welfare service, "There for You", to boost the take up of pension credit and to ensure that retired members access all the benefits to which they are entitled. There is also money saving advice on energy efficiency and debt.

Retired members have thrown their weight behind UNISON's campaign for a National Care Service. Other important national campaigns supported by retired members during the year were public ownership of energy utilities, declining bus services, transport by train, bank closures and digitalisation.

NRMC was proud to support UNISON's Year of LGBT+ Workers, to raise awareness of LGBT+ rights and challenge prejudice and discrimination.

Working with other organisations representing pensioners, such as the National Pensioners Convention, Age UK and Independent Age, as well as the TUC is an important aspect of NRMC's work. Campaigning for a decent pension income, retention of the triple lock, and against any further increase in state pension age also remain significant activities for NRMC.

UNISON is well represented by retired member activists on various committees and working parties of the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) where UNISON makes its voice heard and works together with other trade unions on shared campaigning issues.

The National Committee continues to work to improve the organising capacity of retired members branches and has carried out a survey to measure the involvement of branches in campaigning activity and identify any barriers to participation. A full report will be available for the October 2025 conference.

Health and Safety Campaigning

UNISON remains at the forefront of ensuring the health and safety of our members across public services. Over the past year, we have tackled critical issues, campaigned for policy changes, and engaged with key stakeholders to improve workplace conditions.

The National Health and Safety Committee continues to promote regional health and safety rep recruitment through our campaign, Be on the Safe Side. Our continued focus on equalities is crucial in making sustained progress toward meeting our proportionality and fair representation commitments.

The health and safety unit has delivered numerous workshops and seminar presentations at events across our regions and groups, and external partnerships. Additionally, we have collaborated with service and equality groups, supporting activities on several health and safety issues.

Health and safety representatives have worked diligently to address significant challenges through various campaigning, organising, and bargaining approaches. In 2024, we intensified our efforts to highlight key health and safety concerns affecting our members;

Building Safety and Asbestos

UNISON has been actively involved in addressing the risks associated with unsafe buildings and asbestos exposure. We supported a research project with Mesothelioma UK, which produced a report estimating the economic cost of asbestos-related diseases at £1.3 billion. Findings suggest that removing asbestos from schools and hospitals within the next decade could save the UK economy nearly £12 billion over 50 years.

The unit has maintained active engagement with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regarding the European Commission's steps towards lower protective limit values for asbestos and other hazardous substances. In addition, we attended a roundtable event at the Department for Work and Pensions to discuss asbestos management. UNISON continues to advocate for the urgent need for a national asbestos database and a policy of asbestos removal, prioritising the highest-risk buildings to ensure the safety of members and the public.

Our Health and Safety activities with the UNISON Education Team and Policy Unit continue to raise awareness of safety concerns regarding school buildings. Alongside this we have continued working in partnership with the NHS through the Health and Safety Well-being Group. Guidance for members on RAAC and asbestos has been developed, updated, and is available on the UNISON website.

Stress in the Workplace

In response to the growing crisis of workplace stress, UNISON launched a Stress Charter in 2024 following the 2023 National Delegate Conference decision. The charter is now available on the UNISON website, providing essential guidance on tackling stress in public service workplaces.

Violence at Work

One of the greatest risks to our members' health and safety is workplace violence. UNISON remains steadfast in its commitment to eliminating violence and harassment at work. The UNISON End Violence at Work Charter, which outlines ten key actions for employers to improve workplace safety, continues to gain momentum with an increasing number of signatories. The 2024 'Violence in Public Services' Seminar, held on April 30, saw nearly 300 attendees discuss strategies to tackle workplace violence. The event received positive feedback, and insights gained will shape future initiatives.

Occupational Health

Inadequate occupational health support is preventing many of our members from staying healthy and safe at work. The UK government's Get Britain Working White Paper, published on November 26, 2024, announced plans to launch an independent review into the role of UK employers in promoting healthy and inclusive workplaces. Towards the end of 2024, UNISON Health and Safety commissioned the Fabian Society to carry out a 'health at work' research project to help position UNISON at the centre of future policy debates on workplace occupational health and safety.

Political Engagement

With a Labour government now in Westminster, UNISON is actively engaging with ministers and civil servants on health and safety policies and practices. The Employment Rights Bill seeks to give workers employment rights from day one. While it does not directly address health and safety legislation, the accompanying policy papers indicate that a review of health and safety guidance and regulations will be introduced. We have met with the Minister for Social Security and Disability, who has responsibility for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Discussions focused on the importance of partnership working to address fundamental health and safety issues. UNISON is actively engaging with HSE decision-makers to increase tripartite arrangements at the HSE level.

Through sustained political engagement and strategic campaigning, we are ensuring that workers' voices are heard, and their rights are upheld. Our commitment to workplace safety remains unwavering, and we will continue pushing for stronger protections, better policies, and meaningful change for all our members.

Pensions

General

The government announced it would conduct a comprehensive review of pensions. This is currently awaited. UNISON continues to call for the minimum employer contribution to auto enrolment pension schemes to be increased above the very low 3%. UNISON is increasing work on improving defined contribution schemes where good defined benefit schemes like the NHSPS or the LGPS are not achievable. UNISON is pushing for Collective Defined Contribution schemes where investments are pooled, and a target pension is set out but not guaranteed. Still far less value than defined benefit schemes but likely better outcome than standard defined contribution schemes.

Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)

Draft regulations should be issued imminently for consultation to bring in new fair deal for staff being outsourced into the private sector, so in most cases they remain in the LGPS. Draft regulations also imminent for improving widower cover in line with the Goodwin judgement for LGPS England and Wales.

NHS Pension Scheme (NHSPS)

UNISON is pushing to allow members options for greater flexibility to reduce their contributions for lower benefits if needed. Contribution rates for low and middle earners set to marginally increase.

UNISON is pushing for lower retirement age options, especially useful for ambulance staff. As a result of the McCloud judgement The NHSPS is pushing on to offer eligible members the option to choose which NHSPS scheme they want to join for at least part of their service. UNISON is pushing for members to have enough information to make an informed decision. For example, for many the post 2015 scheme will provide the better benefits. Members need to check.

The Gender Pensions Gap

UNISON has been pushing the LGPS, the NHSPS and other schemes to address the gender pension gap. We succeeded in getting a group set up in the LGPS England and Wales to see what can be done to address the reasons for the gap focusing at the moment on career breaks and considering research findings and possible change to the regulations.

LGPS and Capital Stewardship

Structure of the LGPS

When the previous Government was voted out, proposals to require a certain proportion of LGPS funds being put in private equity and activities promoting levelling-up fell with them. We along with nearly all Funds had opposed these, and there was general happiness they are off the table. The new Government continued to wish to consolidate the investments of the LGPS in Investment Pools, and has consulted twice on this. Pooling has been UNISON policy since 2011. Our responses to the consultations have concentrated on the key importance of local LGPS funds retaining control of investment strategy. At the time of writing, the Government's response to the consultations was awaited.

Capital Stewardship

Money in the LGPS belongs to its members, not to the Government or any local authority. It should therefore be invested in accordance with the wishes of scheme members, while giving good returns to fund the payment of pensions. Branches and activists seeking to influence investment have been supported in campaigning, in particular around ensuring that investments do not promote man-made climate change, or states breaking international law.

Devolved Nations

Cymru Wales perspective 2025

Welsh Government budget

In March 2025, the Welsh budget was passed with the aid of the lone Liberal Democrat MS. Without this, the budget would have been voted down – and with it, vital funding for public services.

The budget is a welcome change, but Wales has many difficult steps ahead with the settlement being front-loaded. The smaller allocations for years two and three will present significant issues for public services in Wales. It should be

noted that the second-year allocation will arrive in election year and may well impact upon how the allocation is utilised and leave an opening for opposition parties.

Covid evidence

Controversially, there is no Welsh inquiry into the handling of the pandemic, so UNISON Cymru's evidence continues to be fed into the UK inquiry via TUC Cymru (and UNISON Centre).

For modules looking at the preparedness of the social care sector and the impact on children and young people, we decided the personal testimonies of our members would form the centrepieces of our submissions, to help bring our political commentaries to life.

In January 2024 we convened a number of evidence gathering sessions of social care members to inform our response, taking members through guided questions. In a second, very intensive piece of work in January 2025, we convened six evidence gathering sessions, with our school support staff members and those in FE and HE to hear their stories.

Although the experiences being relived in the sessions were often difficult and traumatic, every member who participated believed contributing to the inquiry was important and were pleased to have done so. Given the sacrifices made by our members, it is so important that their stories are amplified.

Political engagement

In September 2024, UNISON Cymru hosted its annual 'Policy Weekend.' Attended by over 90 senior activists, this year's event had the objective of improving the regions internal contributions to UNISON policy and the confidence of our branches to participate in UNISON's democratic functions.

In March 2025, UNISON Cymru delivered a political engagement event. The event was open to any member who wished to attend and was framed around the 2026 Senedd elections. The program included a session on the rise of Reform UK, the mechanics of the new rules and changes for the next electoral cycle and concluded with two lay-activist panels and workshops focusing on the impact of the profit motive in public services and a blueprint for the future of public services in Wales. The outcome of this

event formed the basis of UNISON Cymru's manifesto asks of Welsh Labour. The document contains a list of popular policies that would attract a vote for Welsh Labour.

UNISON Cymru intends to increase the frequency of these events as part of a wider initiative to reassert our values and encourage greater strategic and critical thinking amongst members.

Social Partnership

UNISON Cymru continues to play a key role in sectoral and national social partnership bodies. The social partnership duty is now in effect with the first statutory reports due in April. Reporting will demonstrate whether employers have properly involved their trade unions in strategic decision making.

Health

NHS Pay

NHS Pay dominated the health service group agenda in 2024/25. The devolution settlement as it is currently constituted means that Wales is routinely in a position where it must await progress in England before the Welsh government will engage in meaningful discussion.

Consequently, the April deadline for a pay increase was missed, and was not settled until October 2024.

As a temporary measure, Agenda for Change staff on Band 2 and the entry point of Band 3 were awarded a partial uplift in May to ensure compliance with the National Living Wage. This partial increase later led to much confusion and frustration amongst members on these bands as the back pay received owing from October's settlement was smaller. In addition, poor communication from both Welsh government and NHS employers in Wales meant that many members believed they should be receiving a 5.5% uplift on their salary in addition to the temporary uplift.

Despite imploring the Welsh government to avoid this for 2025/26, they have announced their intention to repeat this process in the likely event that pay is delayed.

Pay Fair for Patient Care

Swansea Bay University Health Board branch have been campaigning to win the re-banding of Band 2 Healthcare Assistants and commensurate back pay. In November 2024, those members in the dispute voted to take industrial action. Action was scheduled for December 2024 but was averted when the employer made an offer shortly before the action was due to begin. After further consultation, members took the decision to accept in principle the employers offer.

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board continues its PF4PC campaign. It is on a separate timeline to Swansea Bay and at time of writing, grievances have now been submitted, further increasing pressure on the employer.

Local government

Dire financial situation means more cuts

Every Welsh local authority is in a dire financial situation, and it feels like it is only a matter of time before a council goes bankrupt. The Welsh Local Government Association says authorities face a deficit of £559m for 2025/26 and thousands of jobs are under threat this year.

Social care

Removal of profit from looked-after children's services

In May, we praised the Welsh government's Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill's proposals to remove profit from services for looked-after children, for tackling head-on the outrageous profit levels being made by private sector care providers.

We said profit-making is wrong in any social care provision and the Welsh government should be encouraged to apply the same principles to the rest of the sector too.

Independent inquiry into profiteering in social care

Building on the work undertaken between UNISON Cymru and APSE and CICTAR, we have been lobbying hard for an independent inquiry into how much money is being extracted from the sector in Wales as profit and going into offshore tax havens.

Collective bargaining and fair work

We are an active participant in a Welsh government body that will produce a pay and progression framework for care workers, including job roles, qualifications, experience and training and suggested minimum pay rates. This will report in 2026 and though it is voluntary, it will be discussed and agreed by the sectoral collective bargaining body, the Social Care Workforce Partnership.

There is a risk the severe financial pressures councils are experiencing will undermine the good intentions of the National Commissioning Framework on social care. UNISON must be vigilant in monitoring whether councils are applying its promotion of fair work as a key indicator in deciding on which providers are commissioned.

Celebrating care insourcing in Wales

We commissioned APSE to survey Welsh local authorities to determine the extent of in-house provision of domiciliary and residential care and their plans for the future and to highlight the insourcing of services in Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and elsewhere. The report will be sent to every councillor in Wales to demonstrate what is possible and emphasise why services should be directly delivered under a National Care Service for Wales.

A public campaign to remove all profit from social care

UNISON's motion to the 2024 TUC Cymru Congress, 'a public campaign to remove all profit from social care' within a National Care Service for Wales was successfully passed.

Challenging the myths of private sector delivery

To challenge the assertion from the private care sector in Wales that the majority of businesses are small family-run operations, we have commissioned CICTAR to map in detail the private providers at three example councils, in a large city, a rural area and the Valleys. This will determine which care companies are Wales-wide/ UK/ global and the extent of their profit and dividends/ money leaving Wales. We hope the results of the study could be extrapolated for an all-Wales picture

Schools

Consultation on the implications of the SSSNB

In an enormous exercise in January and February we consulted all Cymru school support staff members to see how they wished to respond to the Employment Rights Bill's creation of a School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) for England.

We presented the options to them and the positives and negatives of each; a Wales-only SSSNB, an expanded England and Wales SSSNB, and remaining in the NJC. We asked them to rank them to determine the Cymru lobbying position. There was a clear preference for a Wales-only SSSNB, and we are in discussions with UNISON Centre, NJC unions and the Welsh and UK governments to explore how this might be achieved.

EWC fees win

50,000 low paid school support staff in Wales have been spared a £30 hike in costly Education Workforce Council registration fees for another year thanks to UNISON. Since 2016, Welsh government has subsidised £30 of the £45 free and had decided to end that support until UNISON successful campaigned to force a change of heart.

School support staff seminar and meeting with Education Minister

School support staff spoke directly with Welsh

Government's cabinet secretary for Education, Lynne Neagle, at our school seminar to mark 10 years of UNISON's Stars in our Schools campaign. The cabinet secretary heard from members about violence at work, ALN, their poor rates pay, EWC registration fees and frustrations that the Level 1 grade had not yet be phased out despite the official Welsh government task and finish group recommendation.

Changes to the new school year

In February 2024, Welsh government consulted on proposals to shorten the school summer holiday by one week and lengthen the October half-term by a similar amount. The government says the move would boost pupil attainment and help minimise staff fatigue.

We conducted a survey of school members to inform our submission and nearly 3,000 school support staff responded. They wanted ministers to prioritise dealing with staff shortages, low pay, and increased workloads rather than change the school year and over a quarter of school support workers would quit their jobs if Welsh government plans to shake-up the school year went ahead.

When asked what would improve staff wellbeing in schools, they called for better pay, 52-week contracts and the recruitment of more staff.

Welsh government's proposals were later withdrawn.

Further Education and Higher Education

Crisis unfolding

Welsh Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are in a dire financial situation. With a very tough funding settlement and facing shortfalls of millions of pounds, they have responded by proposing hundreds of redundancies. The scale of the crisis and likely job losses will be devastating.

Today, we have the lowest number of Welsh student applicants in years and are particularly exposed to the significant decline in international students wishing to study in the UK. This has been described as a perfect storm for Welsh HEIs.

Police, Probation and CAFCASS

The devolution of both the Probation Service and Youth Justice has remained on the agenda at both the Senedd and within UNISON Cymru.

UNISON Cymru led on the development and presentation of a joint union statement advocating for the devolution of both services from Westminster. We continue to work collegiately with our trade union partners in the sector to keep devolution of these services on the agenda.

Labour Link

UNISON Cymru Labour Link has continued its work in influencing policy direction of Welsh Labour and providing a platform to develop future candidates of the party.

In the first half of 2024, a leadership contest emerged between Vaughan Gething and Jeremy Miles. Following a UNISON Cymru Labour Link Committee hustling a secret ballot of committee members was held resulting in the official nomination of Vaughan Gething.

Subsequently, after Gething's resignation, Eluned Morgan ran unopposed and was elected First Minister in June 2024.

In the lead up to the 2026 election, the committee will focus its work on informing members of the new voting system in place, putting candidates forward and helping them through the selection process and vetting candidates who approach UNISON for endorsement at the election.

Equality

Cymru Year of the LGBT+ worker

The emphasis of our Cymru LGBT+ SOG in 2024 was supporting community-based Pride events that were free to attend (and therefore do not exclude our low paid members). We sponsored events across the land, from Flintshire in the north, to Newport in the south. At the latter, we were the main sponsor, and the event would not have gone ahead without our support.

White Ribbon

25th November 2024 marked the beginning of 16 Days of Action for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls, also known as White Ribbon Day, and the Cymru Women's SOG was invited to a cross-party stakeholder event at the Senedd by Joyce Watson MS, and had the opportunity to sign the "Not in My Name" pledge. UNISON's Cymru White Ribbon Ambassador John Byrne offered his full support.

International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition

Each year, UNISON Cymru marks the UN international day for remembrance of the slave trade and its abolition with our Black Members SOG. In August 2024, we brought activists together with the Race Council Cymru, TUC Cymru, the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking coordinator for Wales an event at our Cardiff office.

Cardiff anti-racism march

UNISON members and staff joined a march against racism in the centre of Cardiff on Sunday 17 March 2024.

Wales Union Learning Fund

The 2022-25 Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF) Project concluded at the end of March 2025. In its last year, the project supported 219 learners with accredited learning, and over 450 learners with non-accredited learning – this is despite having a 13% budget cut for that year. The Project Managers utilised their own learning delivery schools to provide courses such as Menopause Awareness, Menstrual Health, Managing Stress, AI in Schools/Social Care, Climate & Just Transition, Understanding Dis & Mis Information. The Project also worked alongside other externally funded programmes to provide workers with learning opportunities around Numeracy skills and Dementia training.

Welsh government consultations

Welsh Government publicly consults on many issues related to our members working lives and citizenship issues to

which the union responds. Below are the consultations UNISON Cymru responded to in 2024.

- Medr Draft Strategic Plan 2025-2030 (Medr), October 2024
- Implementation of Education Reforms (Senedd Children, Young People and Education Committee), April 2024
- Changes to the Structure of the School Year (Welsh government), February 2024
- A Fairer Council Tax (Phase 2), (Welsh government), February 2024

Northern Ireland

With devolved Government restored in Northern Ireland since February 2024 and a new UK Government now in place, the last 12 months have seen a wide range of activity aimed at ensuring delivery on the priority issues and campaigns affecting our members, their families and communities across Northern Ireland.

During 2024 UNISON members, branches and the regional team worked in support of our Black, minority ethnic and migrant worker members, their families and the wider community as they faced abuse and hate crimes fuelled by prejudice. Tragically, this period saw the death of UNISON member Anu Okusanya following a racist incident as she returned home from work. We offer our sincere condolences to Anu's family and friends.

In Northern Ireland, our support for members included intervening with employers, Health Trusts and the Department of Health on a wide variety of issues affecting members, as well as issuing a joint communication with the Independent Health and Care Providers organisation on how employers and trade unions can work together to support Black, minority ethnic and migrant workers.

UNISON Northern Ireland issued guidance to staff and branches aimed at supporting our members on hate crime issues, employment related abuse, intimidation and discrimination at work and in the community; and other issues of concern including access to housing, schools and other services.

Our NI Regional Committee, working with our regional Black and Migrant Workers' Group, will continue and intensify the work required to support our Black, minority ethnic and migrant

worker members, including in relation to supporting and campaigning on behalf of members in relation to immigration,

UNISON College

The UNISON College NI thrived during 2024. In addition to setting out an ambitious programme of work in both member learning and activist education, UNISON College NI has played a key role in the success of the Regional Committee Organising strategy and ensuring we deliver on union-wide Organising to Win priorities.

Our success has included nearly 2000 places accessed on our trade union activist education programme and classroom-based member learning programme. The proven success of UNISON College NI in achieving learning outcomes for thousands of our members across all branches, has enabled the College to both leverage additional learning resources from Government and expand the staffing support available for education and training within the region.

During 2024, UNISON College NI successfully negotiated a 322% increase in funding from the Union Learning Fund (ULF) which has been used to significantly expand our K102 offer and our training programme for classroom assistants.

Bargaining

Over the last 12 months our bargaining and negotiating activities demanding pay justice on behalf of members in Northern Ireland continued, with a further strengthening of the link between bargaining, organising and policy and campaigning priorities.

Despite the return of devolved Government and the election of a new UK Government, the funding crisis in our public services is continuing and impacts across our membership.

In our integrated health and social care system in Northern Ireland, UNISON NI led the way across health unions in pressing for full implementation of the Pay Review Body recommendation in Northern Ireland. In December 2024 we secured a commitment in relation to AfC pay in Northern Ireland for 2024/25 to maintain pay parity with England, but with payment in two phases, reflecting the financial constraints on the health budget. The first phase of payment

was to cover 10 months, back to 1st June 2024. The Department of Health had formally acknowledged that this 10-month payment was only a partial payment and made a commitment to ensure payment of the remaining 2 months once the necessary funding was secured. In January 2025, the Department of Health received additional funding and committed to backdate payment to 1st May 2024.

In February 2025, confirmation was received from the Health Minister that he has approved payment of the full 12 months of the AfC pay award from 1st April 2024. At the time of writing, the full 12 months payment is expected to be in March pay packets.

In social care, UNISON Northern Ireland continued to press through the Fair Work Forum to deal with longstanding issues of low pay and poor terms and conditions across non-statutory social care services. Over the last 12 months, we contributed significantly to a major workforce survey undertaken by the Forum which provided important information from across the registered social care workforce on issues of pay, terms and conditions and the impact of the cost of living crisis. The Health Minister has publicly committed to invest in ensuring that social care workers receive the real Living Wage in Northern Ireland. Through the Fair Work Forum we will be seeking that the real Living Wage be the minimum rate of pay available.

In education, tri-partite negotiations secured a proposal from the Department of Education and the Education Authority to implement the long-awaited Pay and Grading review. Members voted to accept this proposal. Not all pay issues are resolved with this deal but there is significant movement for the vast majority of our members. Extracting funding worth £125 million to implement the Pay and Grading Review was a recognition of our members' efforts. Payments were made in November 2024, backdated to April 2024, with a further lump sum due at the time of writing to be paid in April 2025.

Further to the focus on securing a Northern Ireland specific resolution on the pay and grading review, our NI Local Government Service Group decided to await the outcome of the ballot for industrial action being undertaken in England and Wales on the NJC pay offer in 2024 and developments to follow that, before determining next steps in NI. The NJC Committee subsequently determined following the industrial action ballot to move to accept the offer.

The legal outcome of the PSNI Agnew case continues to have an impact on public and private sector unions bargaining agendas, with the potential that many workers in Northern Ireland may be entitled to repayments unfairly taken from their pay. UNISON NI is receiving the support of our HQ legal team and has been surveying UNISON members in NI to identify if they had been paid their holiday pay incorrectly and to pursue claims of unlawful deduction of wages at the Industrial Tribunal on their behalf. Solicitors, Lewis Silkin, acting on behalf of UNISON members have commenced the process of lodging claims with the Industrial Tribunal for our members to be paid the money rightfully owed to them.

Campaigns – Devolution

The return of the devolved NI Executive and Assembly in February 2024 followed the huge and sustained effort of our members across health, social services and education in fighting cuts and taking industrial action for pay justice. The campaigning of our members in the community and voluntary sector and other employers in challenging cuts to government funding and other essential services was critical.

With devolved Government restored, we are clear it must now deliver for our members, their families and their communities. However, the Stormont institutions returned with public services having had major cuts imposed here by the previous UK Government in their absence. Despite the return of devolved Government and the election of a new UK Government, this funding crisis in public services in Northern Ireland continued following the 2024 – 25 budget.

Recent adjustments to the Barnett Formula will provide some additional funding for NI on the basis of need, but ensuring a sustained needs-based funding settlement is available for public services is a priority for UNISON NI and the wider trade union movement through the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU).

The impact of the cost of living crisis continues to be felt across our membership, particularly the lowest paid, and this reality faced by our members continues to underpin our policy and campaigning work.

At the time of writing, over a year on from the restoration of the Executive an Anti-Poverty Strategy for NI that can

provide the systemic change needed across society to fully address poverty has yet to be brought forward. UNISON NI has supported our allies in the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) in their successful judicial review challenge against the NI Executive over the breach of its legal duty to have an Anti-Poverty strategy in place. Separately we have been working through ICTU to support a new civic society alliance – the Anti-Poverty Strategy Group - in seeking to influence the development of a strategy to ensure it is comprehensive and taken forwards without delay.

Our UNISON 'Free School Meals for All' campaign is a further important intervention aimed at reducing poverty for our members and their families (see further below).

In health and social care UNISON NI continued to campaign for the development of a public health model in Northern Ireland, on safe staffing, on addressing health inequalities and on tackling privatisation.

UNISON continues to lead trade union engagement with the Department of Health on developing safe staffing legislation that would place clear duties on the Department and employers to workforce plan and secure sufficient staff numbers across the system. In October 2024, UNISON made a comprehensive response to a public consultation on proposals for the legislation. The most recent update we have received from the Department of Health has suggested that, subject to further consideration by the NI Executive, a draft Bill will be introduced to the Assembly in 2025. We will continue to seek that progress be made as swiftly as possible so that effective, robust legislation can be in place without delay.

In education, our UNISON NI campaign for universal, nutritious, free school meals for all children and young people intensified over the last 12 months with the restoration of the Executive and Assembly.

UNISON NI held an event at Parliament Buildings in March 2024 to coincide with International School Meals Day that was sponsored by the Chairperson of the Assembly Education Committee, and co-sponsored by MLAs from various parties. The event highlighted why the move to a universal approach would assist in addressing poverty and the cost-of-living crisis and would have positive impacts for child health and development, as well as emphasising the vital role played by our members in schools catering.

UNISON then gave evidence on our campaign to the Assembly Education Committee in April 2024.

In the community and voluntary sector, UNISON NI has been particularly mindful of the impacts that may be caused to our members due to the ongoing budget cuts to Executive Departments, who fund many programmes delivered by our members within the sector and provide Core Grant funding. Our campaign of opposing cuts to the Supporting People Programme continues. In opposing the budget cuts being placed on the Department for Communities, which funds the programme, we focused particular attention on the impact on Supporting People.

UNISON NI continued our work on the climate emergency and ensuring a just transition. Our UNISON NI Green UNISON Network continues to call for public sector employers to give agreed workplace facility time for Environmental Officers to negotiate on just transition and decarbonisation plans. Through the ICTU Climate Working Group we have engaged with the NI Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on the steps it is taking to establish a Just Transition Commission with representation from trade unions.

We continue to campaign on a wide range of equality and human rights issues alongside our allies across civic society. UNISON NI acts as co-convenor of the Equality Coalition alongside CAJ, which has over 100 member organisations working to promote equality of opportunity. This work continues to be supported by the UNISON Campaign Fund.

With the election of a new Labour UK Government we continue to seek the delivery of the unimplemented commitment to a Bill of Rights for NI. UNISON NDC has repeatedly supported our longstanding campaign on this issue. Through the ICTU, we have begun engagement with the new Secretary of State on progressing this and other issues regarding equality and human rights.

We play a major role in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and all relevant structures, programmes and conferences. We are represented on both the NI Committee and the Executive Council. Since the return of devolved Government in Northern Ireland, we are working extensively alongside ICTU and the wider trade union movement to seek that the new Executive develop and implement a comprehensive devolved Employment Rights Bill to strengthen workers' and trade union rights in NI.

An extensive consultation on the Bill concluded in October 2024, which included consideration of areas such as zero-hour contracts, fire & rehire, proposals in relation to how trade unions operate, such as in relation to electronic balloting, and the rights of unions to access workplaces. Support for people with caring responsibilities and those requiring leave relating to neonatal care were also consulted upon. UNISON NI worked alongside ICTU to carefully consider the detail of the proposals and make a comprehensive ICTU response, alongside the UNISON NI response. In February 2025 we gave evidence to the Economy Committee at the NI Assembly which is leading scrutiny of the proposals.

International solidarity: Our Global Solidarity Group and many of our branches have worked continuously with ICTU and allies on the campaign for justice for the Palestinian people and an end to illegal occupation, ethnic cleansing, apartheid and plausible genocide. On Colombia we are working with representatives of the Colombian Government and our partner CAJ to co-host to an international conference on transitional justice in 2025. On Cuba our branches are responding to the call for medical and other essential supplies to be shipped in 2025.

UNISON Scotland Bargaining and Campaigns

Pay Campaigns

2024 was a busy year for pay campaigns. There were only 4 weeks where there was no ballot, consultative ballot or industrial action underway in Scotland. These ranged from large services groups like health and local government to small CVS employers and NDPBs. Successful ballots in most cases led to acceptable offers without action. Members took action winning improved offers in local government, Scottish Water FE. Unison Scotland built on previous use of digital tools to mobilise and consult members alongside more traditional workplace meetings, marches and rallies.

Building on the mobilisation of members through these campaigns 282 new stewards have been identified and trained and 81 new Health and safety reps.

Violence at work remains a key issue in Scotland. The

annual violence at work report, based on the results of Freedom of Information requests, continues to support both local work to improve conditions in workplaces and campaigns to recruit and retain members. Specific schools-based materials have been piloted and are now being used to bolster recruitment in schools and to support local work on improved support for members following incidents and the introduction of prevention strategies in settings.

UNISON campaigns round behaviour in schools have also highlighted the changes in staff roles when almost 40% of pupils in schools have Additional Support Needs. UNISON has had some success with job evaluation and is now focused on driving this work with key branches now identified for focused support. Again building on the issues identified by members during pay campaigns and this is another route to delivering pay rises for members.

General Election 2024

Labour succeeded in all 5 UNISON Scotland LL target seats and the wider results mean 8 new UNISON Labour MPs in Scotland. Campaign work was planned round the results of the research undertaken via the campaigns committee which supported the targeting of messages for both general and Labour Link materials. Analysis of the short campaign is being used to develop campaigns for the Scottish Parliament Election in 2026. In particular we are running a Public Services the Heart of a Fairer Scotland Campaign to influence manifesto development across 2025.

NCS campaign

UNISON led the campaign to change the proposed National Care Service Bill in Scotland. This involved leading the work with a range of other organisations including the STUC, opposition parties and service users. The Bill is now substantially changed. UNISON continues to work on the now renamed Care Reform Bill to ensure Fair Work in the sector, to remove profit from care and continues to campaign for a genuine national care service.

Migrant workers

Scotland has experienced the same surge in membership and complex casework from migrant workers. In addition to

its robust organising and servicing response, the region brought workers together to shape their own specific charter of fair work, equality and human rights. Devolution offers UNISON ready access to Government Ministers on urgent issues of this type and we are optimistic that the demands of migrant workers will shape future rules and practice for ethical commissioning of contracted services.

Scottish COVID Inquiry

UNISON Scotland provided written and oral evidence regarding education services and social care to the Scottish COVID Inquiry. Evidence highlighted UNISON's work to support members during the pandemic and the impact of budget cuts, low pay, lack of effective PPE and sick pay on public services and the staff who deliver them. The Inquiry is ongoing.

Year of the LGBT+ worker

The LGBT+ committee had a busy year working with branches organising events and training to support the rights of LGBT+ workers across Scotland.

Women's Development Programme

UNISON Scotland Women's Committee worked with Activist Education to develop and deliver its first Women's Development programme to increase women in leadership in UNISON Scotland. Graduates will this year act as mentors for this year's programme which started last week. Building on the success of last year's programme we are also running an additional programme for Black Women this year.

Campaign Fund

2024 and the beginning of 2025 has been a busy period for the Campaign Fund. The Fund provided significant support for the union's activity during the 2024 General Election Campaign. This included polling and focus group work, direct mail to members in key constituencies and a public facing advertising campaign 'No Pros – Only Cons' which featured in national and regional newspapers and across social media channels. Evaluation and results analysis suggests that the campaign activity was well received.

Polling continues to show that the union is a trusted source of political information.

In summer 2024 the union was required to run a ten-year political fund ballot. The campaign in favour of retaining the political fund was jointly run by the Campaign Fund and Labour Link. The result was a resounding vote in favour of the continuance of the Fund – with 97% of members voting in favour on a 14% turnout. A key focus of the campaign to keep the fund was the role of the Campaign Fund in speaking up for members and their priorities, tackling the far right and supporting local campaigns.

Over the course of the year all UK nations and regions have benefited from the Fund. Close to 70 bids were approved by the Campaign Fund Committee during 2024. These bids included requests for financial help for prides and other equality related events, support for the union's green agenda, the national care service campaign and work on the Employment Rights Bill. Support for political and campaign work in the devolved nations also featured significantly, with the Campaign Fund Committee approving bids for attendance at Scottish Party Conferences, the Committee for the Administration of Justice/Equality Coalition in Northern Ireland and the Migrant Worker project in Wales.

Tackling the far right continues to be a high priority for the union. UNISON prioritises active and strategically planned work, overseen by PDCC and supported by the Campaign Fund. This work takes place all year round. We aim to support regionally led priorities – facilitating effective actions by branches, activists and officers as threats and campaigns dictate. This allows the union both to respond to upsurges in far-right activity and ensures that we never cease to be vigilant.

Since the General Election the Campaign Fund has been adapting new ways of working to the new post-election political environment – seeking to adopt a more focused approach, build campaign capacity and support campaign innovation.

- 35% of members contribute to the Campaign Fund.
- 16% of members contribute to Labour Link.

Labour Link

The General Election marked a turning point this year for Labour Link, with the first Labour government in 14 years. Labour Link's focus during the election was to fight for and win policies that will change the lives of UNISON members in the Labour manifesto, but also to support Labour candidates who would stand up for public services and public service workers in Parliament. Target seats were identified for activity, resources and communications to maximise the union's impact in getting a Labour Government elected. Thanks to this, the UNISON Group of Labour MPs has tripled in size and is the largest it has ever been, helping grow UNISON's influence in Parliament.

A raft of changes to Labour's policy platform were won by UNISON which were visible throughout the manifesto, such as the commitment to the National Care Service and the New Deal for Working People. The work did not end there, and after the election, Labour Link is holding the Labour government to account for the commitments it made in its manifesto. UNISON and Labour Link were central to the creation and negotiation which has led to the Employment Rights Bill coming to Parliament, and alongside teams from across the union, have been meeting with politicians and Government officials to ensure the Bill reflects the pledges that were made prior to the election and give our members the best possible outcomes.

Work also continues to influence Labour on issues critical to activists and for the benefit of all UNISON members, such as Local Government funding, pay in the NHS and migrant care workers.

The repeal of the Trade Union Act 2016 as part of the Employment Rights Bill gives Labour Link an additional opportunity with the restoration of the Political Fund opt-out. Work, which started through the Member Engagement Programme, will continue to ensure joining Labour Link is as easy and clear as possible for new and existing members. While further engagement with members, activists and self-organised groups will be undertaken to improve awareness of Labour Link but also, to promote how affiliation to the Labour Party is used to take UNISON policy to the heart of government.

Following the success prior to the General Election of Labour Link's work in identifying, training and supporting UNISON activists who wish to stand for elected office and in

preparation for upcoming elections, Labour Link has continued to provide training with partners including Labour Unions, including in the devolved nations with a view to the 2026 elections.

After the unfortunate cancellation of the 2024 Labour Link Forum due to the General Election, the 2025 Forum in Glasgow will provide another opportunity for UNISON Labour Link activists to make their voices heard in the first year of this new Labour Government and continue to drive Labour Link's agenda.

provided intensive support to organising campaigns, providing bespoke advice and resources and new campaign materials.

Our One UNISON organising targets achieved a net growth in members of 4319 as of November 2024 and 214 new stewards since the campaign began.

The campaign is turning its focus to re-banding of other occupational groups, with phlebotomists in Cheltenham and Gloucester taking to the picket lines in a historic strike.

Key campaigns in health care

Earnings max/PFPC wins

The past year has been incredible for the Pay Fair for Patient Care campaign. As one of the first One UNISON organising target campaigns, we have demonstrated how much can be done by strategic planning, prioritising and targeting organising resources. Over £141 million in back pay has been won, this money continues to make a huge difference to our low paid, mainly women healthcare assistants in the NHS. Combined with over £57 million in ongoing wages per year, our members are substantially better off.

UNISON members have taken over 175 days of strike action with lively picket lines and many members taking industrial action for the first time. Deals have been done in multiple trusts and NHS boards in England and in Wales. Notably, in North and South Tees the campaign there resulted in a package of back pay worth £14 million. UNISON has supported industrial action and settled disputes in 14 trusts, these have been in Derriford, Grimsby, Lewisham and Greenwich, Surrey and Sussex, Leicester, Northampton, Kettering and East and North Hertfordshire. UNISON delivered wins with good organising and strong ballot mandates in Swansea, Merseyside and West Lancashire Teaching Hospital, Mid Cheshire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, East Cheshire NHS Trust, South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust and Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

The Strategic Organising Unit, Health Service Group, Learning and Organising Services and Comms teams have

Preventing and reducing violence against NHS staff

Work continued across the health group to highlight the impact of violence against NHS staff. In 2024 the focus also shifted to include the risks NHS staff face from sexual harassment and sexual violence.

The health service group have been instrumental in leading the work around sexual safety and harassment in the NHS. Earlier this year, the health group worked with the legal department and LAOS to develop a sexual safety training course aimed at ambulance reps. The plan is to adapt and tailor the training for reps in NHS branches across the UK. In addition, UNISON is working with NHS Employers to develop joint training around sexual safety which is aimed at managers and TU representatives. The health group continue to raise issues relating to sexual safety with the appropriate regulators and work is being done to ensure that victims of sexual safety related issues are given the support they need by the union

In 2024, as part of the 2023 NHS pay deal, UNISON led a review through the national Social Partnership Forum (SPF), to identify ways to tackle and reduce violence against NHS staff. This review built on extensive partnership working on violence prevention and reduction with NHS England and other partners. The review focused on evaluating the impact of existing measures and identifying gaps. A final report was submitted to the government making a series of recommendations including the need for a clear violence prevention and reduction strategy, setting out roles and responsibilities across all levels and departments of the government. We also called for the mandating of the NHS Violence Reduction Standard on NHS organisations, which was refreshed and republished following tireless campaigning and influencing by UNISON. The review's

recommendations also covered the need for a national data set and better reporting of incidents, including the development of a user-friendly digital reporting system.

As violence in the NHS is often accompanied by clinical conditions, the review also recommended further support and guidance to organisations on how to deal with clinically challenged patients and, in some cases, withholding of treatment or the use of criminal prosecutions. We also recommended better risk assessment, training, and support as well as a standard approach to post incident support. All of this must be embedded through partnership working with local unions recognising the status and expertise of health and safety reps. At the time of writing, we are waiting for the government to respond to our recommendations.

In addition to this review, the Health Service Group also engaged with the Self Organised Group conferences to understand the impact of violence against staff based on their protected characteristics. Using data from our 2024 UNISON Your Life at Work survey, and the NHS England staff survey, we were able to break down the impact and show risk factors that our SOG members faced. These sessions were used to engage delegates in our policy development work around preventing and reducing violence against NHS staff.

Challenging racism in the NHS

Our Race for Equality campaign to challenge racism in the NHS continued as a service group priority. Despite NHS England's refusal to publish the raw data of the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) for 2023 which shows how all trusts in England are performing on race equality, branches were encouraged to use their individual trusts' WRES data to utilise the knowledge from the WRES training course run by the health group to hold their employers to account. Thanks to pressure from UNISON, NHS England agreed to provide the raw data and to publish this year's tranche of data with the upcoming report this year.

Following last year's motion to health conference to increase participation of Black members in the health sector, the health group explored how to ensure that Black members who have become active through key campaigns including Race for Equality, Pay Fair for Patient Care and our overseas nurses network, were encouraged to become involved in our service group structures and networks.

Branches were also encouraged to continue to use our Race for Equality campaign resources including the series of briefings alongside our anti-racism charter and model anti-racism policy.

In the summer, the health team joined with the rest of the union and our allies to call out the appalling impact of the race riots, working with other health unions to issue guidance for staff sides on how to support and protect health members affected, and working through the NHS social partnership forum to issue a joint statement condemning the racist violence and calling for joint work to support healthcare staff.

We continued our sponsorship of the 'National B.A.M.E. Health and Care Awards' by sponsoring the 'Inspiring Diversity and Inclusion Lead' award, with the ceremony taking place in September 2024. Members of our Healthcare Service Group Executive were invited to attend the ceremony. We also sponsored the first of the awards' workforce summits: the 'Belonging, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Summit', which aimed to examine the unique challenges and opportunities that Black staff face in healthcare.

We celebrated Black History month by promoting events and resources to health branches and profiling the achievements and experiences of two of our leading Black activists involved in our health service group structures.

In negotiations on nursing career progression, as part of the non-pay elements of the 2023/2024 Agenda for Change pay deal, we focused demands specifically on the removal of the barriers to career progression that limit the careers of many Black nurses. We raised this with MPs and encouraged questions for the Department of Health and Social Care on these issues.

We continued to lobby for stronger protections from bullying, harassment and violence that disproportionately affect Black nurses; alongside this, our strategy for in-sourcing and making the NHS bank work better, aimed to reduce the exposure of Black nurses and midwives and other staff to these issues.

Resources for branches to better challenge racism in nursing and midwifery are in development and will be supplemented by targeted communications resources for members.

Local Government campaigning

Annual report funding and cuts

The funding and cuts crisis and the provision of support to branches and regions has remained the top priority for the Local Government Service Group over the last 12 months.

In 2024 we published a range of high-profile releases on the extent and impact of the local government funding crisis. We released the findings of our children's centre and youth centre closure Freedom of Information (FOI) request to highlight the scale of vital services that have been lost since the onset of austerity. Despite the challenges of publicising our research during a general election campaign, which hoovers up most news coverage, our findings still received significant coverage in the Financial Times, Express, Mirror and a range of local papers. We highlighted how 1,243 council run youth centres were closed between 2010/11 and 2022/23 across England and Cymru/Wales, whilst over 1,100 council run children's centres were closed across the same timeframe.

The Service Group once again carried out comprehensive FOI research on the funding gap faced by councils. Our report on this work was released in September 2024, and it showed that the collective funding shortfall faced by all councils (including districts and boroughs) across England, Cymru/Wales and Scotland for the financial year 2025/26 was over £4.3bn. The cumulative funding gap for 2026/27 will increase to over £8.65bn. These figures were far higher than those calculated by the Local Government Association, because ours were the result of more detailed forensic research.

To better try and influence the outcome of the Westminster Government's October 2024 budget, UNISON's media team shared our research exclusively with the Financial Times. This approach was successful and we secured front page coverage. Further coverage was also secured in the Standard, the Mail Online, the Independent, the Daily Mirror, the Scotsman, the Daily Star and in the local government sector press. The report was also widely covered in local and regional press.

For the first time we also undertook research to establish what percentage of local authorities' net revenue budget the funding gap figures represent. For instance, a large

council like Glasgow faced a £50m funding gap for 2025/26. But this city council had a predicted net revenue budget of almost £2bn, which meant the funding gap accounted for 2.6% of Glasgow's budget. In contrast, a far smaller district council like Rushmoor faced a £4.1m funding gap against its net revenue budget of £11.9m – meaning its funding gap represented 34.6% of its predicted revenue budget. More details can be found in our 'Councils on the brink' research report and in this spreadsheet from our website.

UNISON shared the findings of the report with more than 40 MPs at a Parliamentary event in September 2024. Our Local Service Champions Award winners and vice-chair of the SGE, Lorraine Thomson, spoke to MPs about the consequences of the funding crisis, whilst staff members provided them with a breakdown of our research along with a demonstration of the new council cuts website to show them what the situation is like in their local area.

UNISON's new council cuts website was also 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 2025/26. 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 loss of services that councils have experienced since 2010 to show the real impact and consequences of the funding crisis.

In order to ensure that more politicians are contacted about local council funding we urged members 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.

We also encouraged branches to lobby MPs ahead of the October 2024 budget to ask them to support our calls for more funding for local councils. Guidance was provided to branches from our updated Save Our Services toolkit and we will be continuing to ask branches to do the same in the run up to the Spring Spending Review.

Furthermore, we shared our research findings directly in a meeting with the Local Government Minister Jim McMahon as well as sending our findings through to the Chancellor of the Exchequer ahead of the budget.

In the October budget there was a modest increase in

funding provided for local councils in the Budget, but it is clear that major financial challenges remain for the sector, and it is likely that a number of councils will still have to seek exceptional financial support from the Government in the coming months. An extra £1.3bn grant funding for councils in England was provided by the Budget; but this is dwarfed by the collective £3.4bn funding gap that English councils are facing.

However, given the challenging financial climate, UNISON should celebrate our role in generating extra funding. More money was specifically provided to deal with the crisis in social care, housing and with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and a commitment to end competitive bidding for money was made. There were a few other positive measures, including giving councils the ability to retain all the money from any future buy to let sales.

The budget also saw an extra £1.7bn being provided to the Government in Cymru/Wales, £3.4bn for the Scottish Government and £1.5bn for the Northern Irish Government.

The October Budget did not result in a shift to extra investment being provided to a range of preventative local government services that could reduce demand on other public services (for instance more investment in children and youth centres). This underlines the need for the Local Government Service Group to impress upon the Government how crucial local councils are to delivering various government missions.

The Provisional Local Government Financial settlement in England was announced in December, along with draft budgets by both the Scottish and Welsh governments.

In addition to what was announced in the recent Autumn Statement, councils in England were awarded a further £700m in the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement. This was made up of an extra £200m in adult social care funding and around £500m to support councils with the costs associated with the increase in employer national insurance contributions, alongside a small uplift in the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant.

The Scottish Government promised councils a £1bn uplift in funding when compared to their 2024/25 funding settlement and ended its council tax freeze policy when it announced its draft budget in December. Meanwhile, in Cymru/Wales, the Government's draft budget in December

resulted in a 4.3% increase in the settlement to Welsh councils being proposed.

Unfortunately, these modest increases in funding are not enough to relieve the growing pressures and levels of demand that councils are continually experiencing, nor to repair the damage inflicted by over a decade of savage cuts.

Instead, several councils have continued to indicate that they are experiencing severe levels of financial distress, with Worcestershire, Flintshire and Somerset Council all raising the prospect of potential bankruptcy in the near future unless more central government funding is forthcoming. Eight English councils, including Bradford, Windsor and Maidenhead, Hampshire and Slough, have made requests to the Government to allow them to increase council tax rates above the 5% limit to help deal with their financial challenges.

Recognising these ongoing challenges, the Service Group has continued to encourage as many UNISON activists as possible to meet with and lobby their local MPs for more council funding ahead of the Westminster Government's Spring Spending Review. The service group has been providing members and branches with guidance on how to effectively lobby MPs and we hope that SGE members can play a leading role in their regions to support these efforts. UNISON has been keen to stress to MPs just how important a role local councils will play in helping the Government secure its ambitions to improve the country; from driving economic growth, solving the NHS crisis, through to tackling crime and reducing carbon emissions. Information on how to help convey these messages has been incorporated into our lobbying guidance. The Service Group has remained cognisant that increased public spending by the Westminster Government will lead to improved settlements for the devolved UK governments via the Barnett formula.

The Service Group has again arranged for the delivery of several local government finance training courses for activists and organisers over the last 12 months, which have once again been delivered by the Local Government Information Unit and have been positively received. Individual support has also been provided to branches like Shropshire, Warrington and Cornwall where their councils have been facing particularly significant financial challenges.

Talks have been delivered to several regional local government committees about the funding crisis and the new campaign materials that are now available to help branches take on any proposed cuts.

Local Service Champions campaigning

UNISON's Local Service Champions Campaign again celebrated the contribution UNISON members in local government make to delivering vital local services.

The Local Service Champions Awards are a key part of this work. The awards aim to 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 better pay.

Once again, we received some very impressive nominations from every UNISON region and nation. The winners received their awards at the 2024 Local Government Conference from our General Secretary Christina McAnea and Service Group chair Glen Williams. The overall winner was Alys Exley-Smith, a community relations manager from UNISON's Lewisham branch. Films of the winners were produced and promoted with widespread coverage across social media.

UNISON held its Champions Day in December, 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.

Our Local Service Champions from 2024 took part in an effective parliamentary lobby of MPs in October to call for more council funding. Our overall winner was also interviewed by the actor Sally Lindsay to further highlight the great work that council workers do and the need to fund them properly.

Around 400 nominations were received for our 2025 Champions Awards, with shortlisting and judging taking place in the spring.

Local Government White Paper (England)

The government's White Paper on English Devolution proposes the establishment of mayoral combined authorities across several regions in England. These authorities would be led by directly elected mayors, giving them greater powers to make decisions on issues such as economic development, public services, and infrastructure. The aim is to shift decision-making to a more local level, with the new authorities taking responsibility for a range of services, including housing, skills, health, and transportation. These proposed mayoral authorities are intended to bring more power to local leaders and allow for more strategic control over local resources. As part of this process, consultations are being held in regions such as Cumbria, Cheshire and Warrington, Norfolk and Suffolk, Greater Essex, Sussex and Brighton, and Hampshire and the Solent, where the government is seeking input on the proposed geographies and the potential impact on governance, local services, and economic outcomes.

UNISON has begun the process of responding to these proposals. The union will be responding to each of the consultations in the priority devolution areas, ensuring that the voices of workers are heard as part of the process. UNISON is examining and coordinating the impact of the devolution proposals across different service groups, ensuring that the interests of all workers are considered as new structures and governance models are introduced. UNISON has begun to use this opportunity to advocate for the devolution of probation services, which would allow for greater local control over rehabilitation and offender reintegration.

Whilst there are potential benefits of devolution in terms of localising decision-making, UNISON has raised significant concerns regarding the potential impact on local government workers and services. The union is closely monitoring proposals for local government reorganisation, especially those concerning the move towards unitary councils and the abolition of district councils. UNISON has made clear that any local government reform must not be used as a cover for job cuts or changings in workers terms and conditions.

The union has publicly warned that the abolition of district councils, as proposed in several regions, could put thousands of local government jobs at risk. The union is particularly concerned about the impact on workers who

may be transferred to new authorities and could face changes to their terms and conditions, including pay, pensions, and benefits. UNISON has advocated that no compulsory redundancies should result from the reorganisation, and that wages, pensions, and benefits should be protected during any transition to new authorities. We have stressed the importance of preserving local services after the reorganisation, warning that communities must not lose access to essential public services as a result of the reforms.

The group has considered what form of research on funding models might be needed, to ensure we are fully equipped in our campaign for free higher education funded by general taxation. It is hoped that this research can be conducted or commissioned early in 2025.

A well-attended webinar took place in October 2024 for activists on campaigning, negotiating and organising around redundancy proposals. Further webinars on building resistance to cuts are planned for 2025, and it is hoped that regions can hold equivalent online events which bring together branches and organisers.

Higher education campaigns

Over the last year the financial crisis in many universities has deepened. Years of under-funding, tied to marketisation and competition for students, have left many universities struggling financially. UNISON has been warning about this scenario for many years, but there is now wider awareness among politicians and the media that something needs to be done.

UNISON members have borne the brunt of the funding problems, with many universities – especially newer institutions – proposing massive programmes of redundancies. We congratulate those branches and regions that have fought back against these cuts, in many cases achieving significant reductions in the level of cuts.

But it is clear that a national, political response and solution are needed. In November 2024, Secretary of State for Education Bridget Philipson announced a 3.1% increase in maximum tuition fees for 2025/26, to £9,535 (full-time) and £7,145 (part-time). Maintenance loans will also increase.

The Secretary of State also wrote to the HE trade unions, setting out her desire to work with us to understand our analysis of the situation, the changes we believe are necessary, and our views on these principles she set out. UNISON has met with Jacqui Smith, the Minister for Further and Higher Education to discuss our views on the future of HE.

To take forward UNISON's campaign work on HE funding, the Service Group Executive set up an HE funding campaign sub group. The group has agreed several strands of work.

The campaign group has also agreed to produce new guidance for branches, building on existing UNISON guidance but with a specific focus on fighting redundancies in HE, and guidance for branches on how to lobby local politicians on HE funding specifically. The group will also explore what training is available and whether any new training needs to be developed.

Underpinning this work, background research is crucial. In 2024 the SGE set up its own database of HE cuts and proposed cuts, and asked regions and branches to inform the centre of any proposals – as well as any successes in resisting them.

Education funding

Over the last 12 months, UNISON has continued to campaign for more funding for schools, pushing for a new approach and major increases in investment from both the last government and the new Labour government.

In the Autumn Budget 2024, the government in England allocated a further £2.3 billion to the schools budget in 2025–26, with about £1 billion devoted to high needs funding. This allows for 1.6% real-terms growth in school spending per pupil. However, a large part of these increases reflects the increase in special needs funding and overall funding levels are only just returning to their 2010 base levels.

School capital spending is due to rise from £6.3 billion in 2023–24 to £6.5 billion in 2025–26. From within this spending total, the government will need to cover the costs of the delayed school rebuilding programme, the costs of addressing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in schools and other overdue school repair costs. This leaves many schools struggling to cope with the increased costs of maintaining a school estate which is in a dangerous state of disrepair due to deep capital funding cuts under the previous governments since 2010. This will need addressing in the Comprehensive Spending Review.

In Scotland, school funding for 2025/6 will have a real-terms increase of just over 0.5%. Whilst this is a lower increase than in recent years, per pupil funding in Scotland remains significantly higher than in England. There are predicted to be significant falls in pupil numbers in Scotland that will increase pressure on jobs.

In July 2024 the Welsh Government announced that schools expenditure is budgeted to be £3,591 million, an increase of 7.4% over the previous year. Despite this increase, the number of schools in Wales showing budget deficits has risen, with increasing pressure on school funding resulting from the rise in special needs funding and support for disadvantaged pupils. In February 2025, the Welsh Government announced a review of the funding formula to schools.

Northern Ireland is still facing a crisis in education funding. The education budget remains under significant strain, 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. The crisis in funding of SEND is placing schools and local authorities in particular financial difficulty, with predictions that the situation is only going to get worse. We are clear that the 2025 Comprehensive Spending Review needs to deliver a substantial increase in funding for education.

Further Education and 6th Form colleges

In England, the pay claim was submitted in March that called for a pay rise of 10% or £3000, all colleges to become Foundation Living Wage employers, improvements to workload and, most importantly for us, a call for employers to jointly campaign with us for proper national bargaining. A recommendation was made of 2.5%, or £750, whichever is greater in October. A digital consultation did not achieve the turnout required for further action.

In Scotland, following two years of industrial action, members voted to agree to the pay offer of a £5000 pay uplift (covering 22/23, 23/24 and 24/25) earlier this year.

In Wales, pay for all staff in FE is linked to the pay award for schoolteachers and fully funded. This year was no exception and a pay award of 5.5% was agreed and paid from 1 August 2024. Additionally, colleges in Wales remain committed to the Real Living Wage and colleges adjusted this after applying the 5.5% award.

In Northern Ireland, NJC terms and conditions apply.

6th Form Colleges

Pay in 6th form colleges for 2024/25 was settled after disputes arising from the disparity in funding received by colleges in MATs and those that remain FE corporations. Following consultation, members have accepted an increase of at least 5.5% (up to 6.7% for the lowest paid) from Sept 2024 in colleges that are part of MATs. Members in 6th Form colleges that remain FE corporations have accepted a 3.5% (up to 5.6% for lowest paid) from Sept 2024, and from April 2025 all support staff move on to a revised pay scale that equates to a rise of at least 5.5% (up to 6.7% for lowest paid).

Campaigning

The Champions in our Colleges campaign ran for its second year (nationally) in February 2024, but involvement in the campaign was disappointing. Ways to revive the campaign have been discussed by the committee and the wider activist network at the 2024 seminar, including a celebration of a winning champion at Local Government conference 2025.

Early Years

UNISON 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. Whilst UNISON has welcomed government initiatives to increase provision of early years in schools and expand breakfast clubs, we are still concerned that the underlying funding for early years is insufficient to properly reward the workforce.

The increase in national insurance contributions and increases in the National Living Wage from April 2025 are likely to have a significant impact on the early years sector. We believe that there needs to be some dispensation for the sector so that additional costs are not passed on to parents. We are urging the government to move forward with proposals for sectoral bargaining in early years in a similar way to their proposals on social care.

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 continue to struggle financially, and we have been supporting branches dealing with proposed cuts and closures.

Energy

UNISON pay agreements and related developments over the past year include:

E.ON

A two-year pay deal agreed. In the first year, a 5.75% increase for 2024/25 applied in January 2024 (brought forward from April 2024), alongside a one-off unconsolidated cash lump sum of £1,350 applicable to staff across the E.ON and Npower collectives. In the second year, a 5.75% increase for 2025/26, to be applied in April 2025.

OVO

A dispute over pay was resolved in late 2024, with a 3.75% increase on pay formally accepted by the trade union side and implemented.

ScottishPower

A two-year pay deal was agreed, comprising a 4.5% uplift for 2024/25 plus a £500 non-consolidated payment (based on company performance targets); in 2025/26, an increase of 3% has been provisionally agreed as part of the deal, with the possibility of re-opening negotiations if inflation remains at current levels.

Northern Gas Networks (NGN)

A two-year pay deal has been agreed, with a CPIH + 0.75% or 3% uplift to be awarded in 2025/26 from April (whichever is higher); and a CPIH +1% or 1.5% uplift to be awarded in 2026/27 from April 2026 (whichever is higher).

National Grid

For 2024/25 an average pay uplift of 5.2% was offered and agreed, with some exceptions. This was accepted and applied in July 2024.

EDF

For 2024/25, a pay uplift of 5.75% for all staff was agreed. For 2025/26, pay talks have been ongoing, with an offer of 3.94% for legacy staff and 4.44% for 2018 addendum staff to be put to members, with an outcome expected in late April 2025.

British Gas/Centrica

In the Customer Experience and Sales Collective (CESC) a pay offer of an average 6.8% uplift for 2025/26 for Level 8 staff has been made, with specific increases subject to a formula agreed in previous negotiations. In the Support and Functions (S&F) Collective, an offer of a minimum 3.7% uplift for Level 8 staff has been made. Both offers have been accepted and will be applied from April 2025.

Northern Power Grid (NPG)

A consultative ballot on an improved uplift to the most recent pay award (for members on P&A terms only) concluded in late 2024 with a high turnout and acceptance rate (71%).

Water, Environment and Transport

Since last year, there have been several pay-related activities and developments within the Water, Environment, and Transport sectors.

Environment Agency

For the 2024/2025 pay award, negotiations were relatively straightforward given government pay policy. Unlike previous years, affordability was not a significant issue for the employer. As a result, most Environment Agency (EA) employees received a consolidated 5% increase. Staff whose pay exceeded the grade rate for their role received a 4.2% consolidated increase plus a 0.8% non-consolidated top-up.

A ballot of members saw 87% voting to accept the offer, with a 65% turnout. Additionally, for the first time since the pay progression buy-out eight years ago, commitments were secured to discuss a return to a skills-based performance progression system. Pay groups were also established to address the alignment of field and staff terms & conditions and explore flexible working arrangements.

This was the first above-inflation pay increase for EA staff in approximately 15 years. However, the real-terms reduction in earnings over that period remains at around 25%, making pay a continuing priority.

Early indications for the 2025/26 pay offer suggest an increase of around 2.8%, with anything above that requiring additional departmental funding. Given that average inflation for 2025 is currently projected at 3.6%, a 2.8% offer without further uplift would be inadequate. We continue to consult members on key priorities for this year's pay claim, which is currently being developed.

Transport Sector

Passenger Transport Forum (PTF) which includes: Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA)

The 2024 pay claim was submitted in February, with employers responding in July. The initial offer mirrored the NJC Local Government pay award of £1,290 to each pay point on each employers pay scales closest point to NJC (LG) point 43 and an increase of 2.5% on all points above this.

After members of both UNISON and Unite rejected the employer's offer, a pay campaign was launched, and members were balloted for industrial action in October 2024. The high turnout delivered a strong mandate for strike action and action short of a strike (ASOS), prompting employers to reopen negotiations and offer further concessions.

All three employers also agreed to discussions on addressing pay equality gaps.

TfGM members opted to continue local negotiations rather than ballot on the third offer. Industrial action took place

from 12–14 December 2024, during which further negotiations occurred. Members later voted to accept the employer's final offer.

Nexus/Metro PTE

Following consultations in August, members in four trade unions voted to accept the 2024 pay award, which included:

- A 4.5% pay increase for all employees from 1 April 2024
- A 4.5% increase in APT&C salary scales

South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) on the other hand operates outside the NJC/PTF process, but its locally developed claim mirrors these negotiations. The initial employer response before Christmas was rejected, with members voting in an unprecedented 50/50 split. A survey identified pay, hybrid working, and travel allowances as key priorities. We await the employer's response.

Canal and River Trust

Members accepted a £1,500 consolidated increase in 2024. The 2025/26 award has been agreed at £1,250 on all pay points about 5.3% for the lowest paid.

Water Industry

UNISON continued its campaign for public ownership and reform of the water sector. In December 2024, we launched our report, *'Clean Water: A Case for Public Ownership'*, in Parliament. The report exposed the failures of privatisation and the financial instability plaguing the sector.

As a result of these pressures, pay settlements for 2024/25 were lower than in previous years, ranging from 4% to 6%. At Scottish Water, a 3.4% pay offer for 2024/25 was rejected, and a pay campaign is ongoing. For 2025/26, some water companies have concluded pay rises averaging 3.3%. However, at Southern County Water, members rejected an initial offer of 3.35%, leading to reopened negotiations at the time of this report.

Community service group

UNISON's campaign for a National Care Service (NCS) in

England has been strongly supported by the Community Service Group. This campaign had a significant impact on Labour's 2024 election manifesto, leading to a commitment to establish an NCS. The union and the Community Service Group, which covers many adult social care workers, now stands ready to contribute to the Casey Commission which will advise the government on its social care reform plans. UNISON Community SGE will be making clear its wish that the work of the commission happens more quickly than the originally announced timetable.

The commitment to a Fair Pay Agreement (FPA) in adult social care is also a major victory for UNISON Community Service Group. The FPA for social care was also included in Labour's manifesto after the union's extensive campaigning efforts. The agreement will set sector-wide standards for pay, conditions, and training, benefiting around 1.5 million care workers in England.

The formation of an Adult Social Care Negotiating Body within the Employment Rights Bill marks significant progress towards securing fair pay for care workers. The Community Service Group will continue to campaign for the successful implementation of an FPA.

UNISON has also intensified its efforts to support and organise migrant care workers. Reports of unfair treatment, including coercive repayment demands and forced on-site presence have continued throughout the year. A dedicated campaign on visa sponsorship reform was launched early in 2025 engaging migrant care worker members.

The Community SGE has also worked with other UNISON Committees and Representative bodies on campaigns to highlight issues like violence at work, pensions in housing associations and sick pay.

Police Probation & CAFcass

Campaigns

The Police Probation and CAFcass Service Group has continued to run our We Are Police Staff campaign across England, Scotland and Wales. We wrote to the new Westminster government in July 2024 drawing attention to the budget crisis which is affecting all forces in England and

Wales. We met with the Policing Minister in January 2025 and a delegation meeting for regional police representatives to meet with the Minister is planned for June 2025.

The Service Group was successful in a bid to the Campaign Fund Committee in February 2025 for resources to hold a Parliamentary event highlighting our We Are Police Staff campaign later in the year. Budget deficits have led to 10,000 police staff jobs being held vacant, with police officers being taken off the beat and put into our members' roles at a much higher cost to the public purse.

UNISON and the other recognised trade unions wrote to the Home Secretary in February 2025 to call for the rigid police officer numbers targets to be relaxed to allow chief constables to recruit the right workforce mix to meet operational requirements. We communicated UNISON's agenda on workforce reform to the Home Office team working on the forthcoming Police Reform White Paper.

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

UNISON continues to campaign for probation to be removed from civil service control and given back to local democratic and operational management.

UNISON was successful in getting a commitment to review probation governance into the 2024 Labour Party Manifesto and we are lobbying for this review to take place sooner rather than later. We are supported in this by the Labour Group of Police and Crime Commissioners.

We continued to promote UNISON's Anti-Racism Charter and the Peter Tatchell Foundation's Apologise Now Campaign.

pay spine from 1 April 2025.

We continued to press for improvements to the PSC Handbook in relation to injuries sustained at work and lobbied the PSC Employers to demand that funding for police staff pay reform be included in the forthcoming Home Office bid into the Spending Review.

Pay talks with Police Scotland for 2024 opened in September 2024 and the following final offer was made by the Scottish Police Authority in October - a 4.75% increase in all salary points with an underpin of £1344 for those below £28,296, with a 10.6% uplift for the lowest pay point, equating to an hourly rate of £14.26.

On a 68% turnout, 64% of members in Police Scotland voted to reject the offer. 84% of those rejecting, voted to consider industrial action. In December the trade unions received an improved offer - Grade 1 Minimum wage £15 per hour; Grade 2 - 3 increases ranging from 5% to 9.34% and grade 4 and above a 4.75% increase. 63% of members voted to accept the improved offer on a ballot turnout of 78%.

UNISON and Napo lodged trade disputes and conducted consultative ballots of probation members during June 2024 to determine the support for industrial action to bring the employer back to the negotiating table over a claim submitted 12 months earlier to re-open the three year pay award. On a 44% turnout, UNISON probation members voted by 98% in support of an industrial action ballot to put pressure on the employer. Work was undertaken in tandem with the consultative ballot to prepare a ballot register and timetable for a potential industrial action ballot. In the end this was not necessary, because, following the general election in July 2024, the employer made an offer to resolve the trade disputes by bringing forward the 1 October 2024 cost of living rise, as part of the 3 year pay award, to 1 April 2024, thereby giving members an additional 6 months' pay, as well as deleting the lowest pay point in pay band 2. This was accepted by the three probation unions, bringing the pay dispute to a successful outcome.

In November CAFCASS made a final pay offer for 2024 of a 4.43% increase on all pay points to cover the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. Members were consulted on the offer in December 2024 and 92% voted to accept.

National Private Contractors Forum

Pay

Police staff members in England and Wales voted overwhelmingly in favour of accepting a 4.75% pay offer for 2024. We were also successful in negotiating the removal of the lowest pay point on the Police Staff Council (PSC)

With an increase of private contractor members in the last year, the National Private Contractor Forum has seen a significant uptick of campaign and support work across our union.

From the ongoing Us2 pay campaign which culminated in Industrial Action for members in several contractors such as Serco, Sodexo and Mitie which focussed on the trade dispute of pay inequality for those staff denied the AfC uplift on the basis that they are outsourced through to Pan European policies negotiated through European Works Councils such as the Veolia Diversity and Inclusion policy which has a direct influence on how our members in Local Government Branches are treated in Waste and Recycling depots across the UK.

Private Contractors Unit held its successful annual seminar with over 50 members from across our service sectors who come together to work on insourcing and pay parity campaigns. A review of the support for private contractor members to organise at branch, regional and national level is much needed. Unfortunately, last year's prioritised motion was not heard for a second year running at conference. This would put in place a system to engage with private contractor members – but we hope that this will be debated at NDC 2025.

Chapter Two

Supporting our branches

Industrial action

Winning for the Future – Better data, better decisions, better disputes

The union continued to support the Winning for the Future project established at the start of 2024. An update on key activity against the three key strands of the work is set out below.

Following the General Election, the laying of the Employment Rights Bill offered an opportunity for the union to press for positive change to Industrial Action laws in Great Britain. The Primary legislation outlined plans for immediate withdrawal of the Minimum Service Level laws and for consultation on how a ‘Modern Industrial Framework’ could be set, covering a range of technical and legal questions relating to ballots and industrial action.

Learning from the project informed UNISON’s response to this consultation (which closed in December 2024) in which the union made a robust case for the full repeal of the 2016 laws (barring the 4-week ‘trigger’ for action mandates). In addition to pressing for these changes - including the earliest removal of ballot participation thresholds - the union also called for meaningful dispute procedures to be developed at sectoral level; reduction of the heavy information burden on unions; and for the introduction of measures to compel government to act when the dispute is over a central pay settlement that they control.

Subsequent amendments to the legislation have clarified that secondary legislation will deliver:

- Simplification of information to be exchanged and changes to deadlines
- Sequenced introduction of e-balloting and lifting of the 50% ballot participation threshold (alongside a commitment to explore how and where workplace balloting could be used)

- Restoration of ballot mandate period to 12 months

Project work will need to be adjusted to accommodate the significant technical and legal changes that the Bill and subsequent regulation will introduce.

Main areas of project activity

Data

- Encouraging data hygiene including through incorporation of ballot-readiness questions in Branch Organising Framework and developing a ballot audit tool
- Setting up monthly e-reports to branches highlighting key ballot-related data-gaps
- Exploration of consistent use of the Bargaining Group field in RMS as a key data point

Process and information

- Detailed end-to-end process and system mapping to support quicker decision-to-doorstep times for ballot papers; provide consistent, accurate and tracked reports on all aspects of dispute activity and performance
- Lessons learned work with service groups and sectors
- Training workshops run with committees across the union
- Strategic planning support provided on request

Activist training

- ‘Delivering your dispute course’ developed and pilot run. Feedback incorporated and dates lined up to test the tweaked contents and refine ahead of launch at NDC this June.
- Course contents mapped for ‘Your role in disputes’ course for Service Group and Sector reps
- Planned incorporation in Stewards and Refresher training paused pending legal changes

Focus for the year ahead

- Drive take up of ‘Delivering your dispute’ course to support planning of emerging disputes
- Build and test ‘Your role in disputes’ course for Service Group members so it can be incorporated into induction for the 2026-7 term of office
- Set out a data plan for year-on-year improvement of

ballot-related membership information

- Reach agreement as appropriate on process and system changes to support better delivery and reporting on all aspects of the dispute process

Branch Support and Organising Fund

The Branch Support and Organising Fund (BSOF) activity continued to grow with successful bids and project activity taking place across all regions in 2024.

The BSOF receives 2% of annual income, and in 2024 this was equivalent to £3.7 million, with funding split across regions according to membership size. Some regions have branch specific projects and have secured match funding from branches to undertake these projects. This match-funding amounted to £658,000 in 2024.

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

All regions currently have active BSOF projects taking place, with regions employing a mixture of Local and Area Organisers. These projects had a significant impact on organising activity and outcomes in 2024. Monthly BSOF project reporting showed a high level of member and activist recruitment from BSOF funded projects, especially when aligned with the Organising to Win priority campaigns. The 716 monthly BSOF reports submitted by projects in 2024 shows over 13,000 new members, 1,200 contacts, and 600 stewards recruited by BSOF funded activity. These figures are expected to increase significantly as reporting continues to improve. A high proportion of the £120m backpay secured through Pay Fair for Patient Care campaigns has also come through campaigns delivered by BSOF funded organisers.

More BSOF funded projects have already launched in 2025. The fund has become a vital resource for meeting UNISON's organising objectives, and all regions have plans in place for 2025 to continue building on the BSOF success and to increase dedicated organising resource. Project monitoring and reporting arrangements continue to improve to ensure good use of resources and ensure key lessons and best organising practice are captured to inform wider UNISON organising activity. As the fund continues to develop in 2025 Regions and Branches are encouraged to

consider more cross regional bids and bids to fund the secondment of activists to further increase the resourcing of the priority Organising to Win campaigns.

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

Branch Procurement Service

The National Procurement Service for Branches was launched in 2023 as a new initiative resulting from the Branch Resources Review.

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

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

We only offer competitive arrangements with ethical providers that we are confident will provide value for money whilst minimising risk to UNISON.

In addition, there's a Procurement Toolkit to help branches check current practices and establish simple procedures to get the best value goods and services.

The service has been promoted several times in the Branch Secretaries Newsletter leading to hundreds of readers accessing the link to the Branch Procurement webpage in 2024.

How to access the UNISON's Branch Procurement Service

Via the Branch Service portal at

branchservice.unison.org.uk

Complete the form

unisonprocurement.freshdesk.com

[/support/tickets/new](https://unisonprocurement.freshdesk.com/support/tickets/new)

Email

b.procurement@unison.co.uk

There are now 351 branches signed up to the system. This accounts for 46% of branches, covering 63% of UNISON members. In 2024 there were further developments to the system, with a set of user training videos to assist with new and refresher training.

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

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

Organising Framework

The Organising to Win strategy confirmed the Organising Framework as the primary planning and evaluation tool for base organising but recognised the existing system no longer met these needs. After extensive consultation and engagement across the union, a revised Organising Framework was developed and launched in October 2024.

This updated framework was created in-house using UNISON systems, ensuring reliable access for organising staff and providing significant enhancements to data tracking and reporting. The new framework now generates branch action plans based on responses to critical questions, outlining clear objectives, timelines, and assigned responsibilities to ensure strong Branch governance and financial management.

The organising sections of the Organising Framework have been re-written to ensure consistency with the Organising to Win strategy and to align organising and bargaining objectives as the means to build stronger workplace unions whilst delivering material wins for members.

An evaluation of the first year of the new framework is currently underway, with further improvements planned for 2025-2026.

CaseWeb System for branches

The CaseWeb system provides a safe and secure platform for managing and storing all casework for branches and regions. It has continued to be rolled out successfully across interested branches in 2024.

Green Activism and supporting the Branch Environment Officer role

The government commitments to get all public services to Net Zero by 2050 necessitates huge transformations of public service buildings, workplace policies and the services our members deliver.

UNISON recognises that trade unions need to be at the negotiating table when these transformations are discussed. NDC 2024 Motion 63 'The Climate Emergency – Why it matters to UNISON' outlined why this is such an emerging and important organising strand for our union.

Climate change is also a topic our members care about and are willing to get engaged with. This represents a new growth area for recruiting prospective members and activists and has been recognised as part of UNISON's broader organising strategy. Work continues on developing resources to support member and activist engagement and to support branches in filling their Branch Environmental Officer (EnvO) positions.

Since the Branch Environmental Officer was added to the formal list of rule-book branch officer positions in 2022 we have seen:

- An increase in our Branch Environmental Activist base from 63 to 185

- A regional Green UNISON contact officer in each region
- Most regions have established, or emerging, green networks set up to support branch activity and share best practice
- Four regions have formalised regional Green UNISON regional sub-committees
- The new Bargaining on green issues in the workplace tool-kit has been launched
- A range of smaller guidance and materials aimed at supporting branches to fill the EnvO role have also being developed and circulated to regional Green UNISON contacts.
- Green UNISON week has now been firmly established as an annual opportunity for branches to engage members on this topic
- Various activist and member-facing training modules have been developed

2026 has been agreed as the Year of Green Activity, this will represent an opportunity to promote this area of UNISON's organising work and to encourage all members to get involved throughout the year.

An inaugural Environmental Officer Seminar will take place in September to link with Green UNISON week and in preparation for the 2026 Year of Green Activity.

UNISON continues to lobby government for formal facility time for trade union Environmental Officer roles.

An Expenses System for Branches

We are pleased to provide an update on the Members Online Expenses (MOLE) system, an important initiative resulting from the Branch Resources Review approved at Conference. This new system is designed to simplify and streamline the expense processing for branch treasurers and activists, making the process quicker, more accurate, and less time-consuming.

The two pilot programs, conducted in 2023 and 2024, provided valuable insights and feedback that have led to several significant enhancements to the system. Although the initial launch was scheduled for 2024, we determined that additional testing was necessary to ensure the system meets the highest standards. We are pleased to announce that these modifications have now been successfully completed.

The full launch of the Members Online Expenses system is now scheduled for July 2025. The extra time has enabled us to refine the system, ensuring it is user-friendly and efficient for all branches.

What to Expect

Integrated System

The new system directly links with OLBA and reporting functions, making expense processing seamless and reducing the need for manual input.

Training and Support

Comprehensive training and support will be provided to ensure all branches can transition smoothly to the new system, with Finance colleagues available to assist throughout the process.

We are confident that the Members Online Expenses system will be a valuable tool for all branches, improving efficiency and accuracy while saving time for treasurers and activists.

We are excited about the positive impact of this new system and appreciate your ongoing support throughout the development process. We look forward to rolling it out and ensuring that all branches have the necessary resources to make the most of this tool.

Bargaining support

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

The guides are continually being remodelled to highlight the best terms achieved across the union as a reference point for negotiations, as well as offering model letters, surveys and agreements as ready-to-hand templates in conducting negotiations. Case studies providing examples of how branches have achieved successes have also become a more prominent feature of many guides.

Revisions have taken place to over 40 bargaining guides and model agreements over the year to ensure that they carry the most up-to-date material for negotiations, while new guides have been developed, most notably in relation

to the four-day working week and green issues in the workplace.

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

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

National Strategic Organising Unit (SOU)

Since the launch of Organising to Win at 2023 NDC, the SOU's focus has been on developing organising capacity and best practice across the union to coordinate, deliver and evaluate UNISON's organising strategy and growth plans.

In 2024 this included:

- Development and coordination of cross regional organising campaigns and activity in NHS Earnings Max (Pay Fair for Patient Care), target Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), and Devolved Nation Social Care
- Implementation of new organising reporting systems, standards, and insight.
- Partnering with LAOS on the design and delivery of new organising skills and methodology training to organising staff.
- Support to regions to develop organising skills and capacity to deliver priority "One UNISON" organising campaigns and growth plans.

In 2025 the SOU continues to support delivery of the Organising to Win strategy and "One UNISON" organising priorities including target MAT's, Schools Support Staff Negotiating Body, and the new five-year strategy for UK Adult Social Care. The SOU is also developing organising materials and best practice guidance for branches outside of those "One UNISON" priority campaigns. SOU remains responsible for developing organising best practice, testing emerging campaigns, building the UNISON Migrant Worker Member Network, maintaining the Organising Space, and deploying the mobile Organising Unit.

Organising to Win (OtW)

OtW has been the organising strategy of the union since NDC 2023. The new strategy aims to meet the changing demands on UNISON and provide a clear vision for a stronger union. The four key cornerstones of the strategy are:

Purposeful organising

Aligning bargaining and organising to win for members

"One UNISON" priorities

Unionwide organising priorities for maximum impact in target areas

Member participation

To rebuild a representative activist base and tackle the big collective issues

Consistent best practice

Develop UNISON best practice tools and training based on what works

Implementation progress to date includes:

- Significant growth in activism, membership, and material wins for members in the "One UNISON" target campaigns of Pay Fair for Patient Care, target English Multi Academy Trusts, and Social Care
- OtW best practice guides and webinars produced www.unison.org.uk/organising-to-win-guides-2024
- Consistent organising skills and methodology training for staff
- Launch of new Organising Framework
- Launch of new Active Member role in social care
- Development of UNISON Migrant Worker member network
- Support for BSOF funded Branch and Regional organising projects

Organising outcomes for 2024 included:

- Third consecutive year of net member growth
- Record joiners of 215,700 and record net member growth of 39,500
- Record 4,550 new activists and 6% net growth in ERA stewards

2025 OtW priorities include:

- Continuation of successful Pay Fair for Patient Care campaign and organising in target Multi Academy Trusts
- An organising strategy around implementation of the English Schools Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB)
- Deliver year one of a five-year strategy to organise UK Adult Social Care, including launch of the new “Active Member” role
- Develop a vision for the Organising to Win branch along with new tools and resources to support branches to achieve ambitious organising goals

Organising to Win (OtW) is proving to be a transformative strategy for UNISON, working in partnership with UNISON departments, regions and branches to drive tangible growth and empowering members across the union. The progress made in 2024, marked by record membership growth, activist engagement, and key successes in targeted campaigns, demonstrates the strength and impact of the OtW approach.

Work is ongoing in 2025 to maintain this momentum, secure an historic fourth year of membership growth, rebuild a strong and representative activist base, and further strengthen UNISON's position as a powerful member-lead union.

Merlin

Merlin is a modern, tailor-made membership system for UNISON, designed for secure use on any device. Over the past few months, several branches have piloted the system, providing positive and invaluable feedback as we prepare for the full Branch rollout.

The new Merlin membership system will replace the legacy WARMS system so existing WARMS users will automatically have access. Later in the year, Merlin will replace the member contact tool for activists.

Merlin integrates with the latest Microsoft security protocols, enabling users to seamlessly switch from Merlin to the new e-learning platform by Totara. Our Merlin delivery plan provides a smooth transition from WARMS, improved data management, and enhanced bulk email capabilities.

Throughout this process, we must ensure system continuity for all other union applications that rely on membership

data, such as CaseWeb and the online conference system. Once the Branch rollout is complete, we will begin the Staff rollout.

UNISON Conferences

UNISON Conference Office continues with its work to ensure that our democratic processes are fully supported ensuring that we use suitable venues, prioritising safety and accessibility for our members.

During 2024, we have sourced two new venues that can be used for smaller conferences – Brighton Hilton Metropole and Swansea Arena – where we held National Young Members Conference in December 2024.

UNISON Conference Office demonstrated its commitment to participation and inclusion at 2024 National Young Members Conference, by sourcing a venue large enough for visitors for the first time.

UNISON Conference Office continues its work on improving the usability and functionality of the Online Conference System (OCS) to ensure that delegates are supported when requesting Reasonable Adjustments and Creche places. New processes have been put in place to make sure that delegates that request this support in good time, are adequately supported at conference. This new process had the added benefit of saving the union money as support can be ordered in good time without additional late fees.

Chapter Three

Supporting our members

Member Engagement Project

The Member Engagement Programme (MEP) which aims to improve the UNISON member experience online continues to make good progress since it started last year. Following extensive research and engagement, digital content aims to be relevant, more personalised and targeted and functionality seamless and intuitive. This should make it easier for members to be informed, become active, actively participate and access support when needed. At the end of the programme, the union will be in a position to measure, understand and improve through targeted intervention areas such as membership recruitment and retention, member satisfaction, participation in democratic processes, campaign engagement and activist engagement.

The programme is now in the development phase with the digital project delivering workable prototypes of the new MyUNISON portal, online joining process and website being used to engage with members and other stakeholders on the new design, functionality and configuration. The data project is making impressive progress joining up existing and these new systems and data sets. Merlin, the upgraded version of RMS/WARMS, is nearly finalised and is presently being tested with pilot branches.

UNISON's data strategy and data architecture

In the second year of the Data and Insight Team, we built on the data strategy work 2023 and developed a roadmap for UNISON's first ever data platform. This new data architecture can unify UNISON's various disparate data sources to enable better insights and reporting across many operational areas across the union. Delivery of the data platform is well underway and we are working with teams and departments from all parts of the organisation to help improve the way we work with data to maximise operational efficiencies and campaign impact.

The Data & Insight Team have also worked with regions and departments to redesign and relaunch the Organising Framework to generate meaningful and actionable insights national strategic decision making regarding base organising.

Work is also ongoing to improve the collection, organisation and reporting of information related to disputes, industrial action ballots and strike actions. Discussions are underway with departments and teams to understand how we can provide better evidence and analytical insights to inform strategic decision making by integrating siloed data sources and streamlining internal operational processes.

See Appendix One for regional breakdown of UNISON membership.

JCWI immigration advice line

One membership service that has been growing in importance is our immigration advice line provided through the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI). Members can access the service by contacting UNISONdirect and it is available for any member who has an immigration related query. The helpline has provided vital advice to members on issues ranging from constantly changing immigration rules, Home Office mistakes, right to work issues, EU settled status issues, right to family life issues and the switch to a digital e-visa system.

The helpline is an important strand within UNISON's organising, recruiting and campaigning work around migrant worker rights and gives our members vital advice as immigration rules are constantly changing and affect our members ability to live and work in this country. The provision of timely immigration advice has never been more critical. Last year, UNISON Direct received 2467 calls asking for advice on immigration related issues, an unprecedented number. The JCWI helpline assisted 1,147 of our members with their queries, a big increase from the 486 members they assisted the previous year. UNISON has invested more resources into the helpline in order to deal with this increase. The majority of these queries do not require immigration advice but instead require trade union bargaining and representation support – and new work is being done to build region and branch capacity to support our migrant worker members with the issues they experience in the workplace.

Organising migrant workers

In 2024, migrant workers delivering UK Adult Social Care became one of the fastest-growing areas of UNISON membership. In response to this growth and the unique challenges faced by migrant worker members, UNISON launched the Migrant Worker Network. This informal network is open to all members with a first-generation immigrant background, including overseas and migrant workers, EU settled status workers, as well as those who have naturalised as British citizens or hold indefinite leave to remain.

The network's key goals include:

- 1 Supporting members in safeguarding their existing rights.
- 2 Encouraging union participation, activism, and leadership.
- 3 Sharing organising lessons and best practices.
- 4 Building solidarity across the union.
- 5 Campaigning for fairer visa rules.

The campaign for fairer social care visa rules launched in February 2025 providing an opportunity to engage migrant workers UNISON activity. Those who participate in the initial action by writing to their MP are invited to take the new "Active Member Pledge". Migrant worker members taking the pledge have been contacted by Region or Branch to engage them in local lobbying and campaign activity in support of the campaign and providing a pathway to further activism and participation within the wider union.

We will continue to build the network, encourage migrant worker membership, participation, and activism, and provide new resources and guidance to assist branches in supporting migrant worker members.

Review of race discrimination protocol

The UNISON Race Discrimination Inquiry was set up by the General Secretary at the request of UNISON's National Black Members Committee (NBMC) after it had received an increasing number of complaints from Black members alleging racism and race discrimination around the provision of support and representation for members who were facing discrimination at work.

Under the inquiry's terms of reference, the purpose of the inquiry was to:

- Investigate UNISON's strategies to challenge race discrimination and deliver race equality in the workplace in response to the increasing number of racism and race discrimination cases at workplaces across the UK;
- Consider how effectively and consistently these strategies were working for Black members and race equality;
- Make recommendations where improvements are needed or where new initiatives should be piloted and/or implemented.

The inquiry panel gathered its evidence and data from a variety of sources including details of complaints received by the NBMC from Black members. In addition, regional reports were received on the operation of the race discrimination protocol from all but one of the regions. The inquiry panel also met with Thompsons Solicitors who provided a report to the inquiry containing information and statistics concerning various aspects of its service provision in race discrimination cases. The inquiry panel also considered UNISON's rulebook, relevant policies and procedures and training records.

A significant and important part of the inquiry's work was dedicated to hearing from:

- Black members who considered they had lived experience of racism and race discrimination at work, and yet had received a lack of support and representation at branch and region in respect of their cases; and
- Black members who had experienced barriers in obtaining appropriate legal advice and representation for their race discrimination complaints.

In order to facilitate this part of the inquiry's work, the inquiry conducted a series of evidence sessions across the region so that Black members could share their concerns and experiences with the inquiry panel. During these sessions, the inquiry panel was also able to consider available contemporaneous documentation so as to assist its understanding of the individual member's concerns. Committee members contacted members who had been in touch with them and heard the evidence of thirteen members.

The sessions took place in February and March 2024. They took the form of 'closed sessions' so that participating

members could be reassured about the confidentiality of their evidence. Whilst the findings and recommendations made by the inquiry panel draw on the evidence heard during these sessions, in order to preserve the necessary confidentiality, none of the participating members are named or identifiable in this report. The inquiry panel is grateful to everyone who has taken the time to take part in and/or otherwise provide evidence to this important inquiry.

The UNISON Race Discrimination Inquiry made 22 recommendations which were endorsed by the National Executive Council on 8 December 2024. The Inquiry report, which reaffirms our commitment to rooting out the structural inequalities that continue to impact Black members, will be presented to the reconvened 2025 National Black Members Conference. A union-wide implementation project will oversee the roll out of the recommendations.

Legal

Introduction

UNISON's in-house legal team saw another busy year in 2024, continuing to bring legal challenges on behalf of our members in court and advocate for worker and trade union rights.

The in-house legal team has successfully run and supported groundbreaking litigation in the highest courts in the UK, such as Fiona Mercer's trade union detriment case below, as well as challenging the laws and regulations that were introduced by the former Conservative government, which threaten individual and collective rights.

UNISON Legal Services also manages and reviews the legal services scheme which provides representation and support to our members on an individual or collective basis across a broad range of legal areas including employment, criminal, and personal injury.

UNISON Legal has worked with the policy team to successfully advocate for changes to the Employment Rights Bill (ERB), which has heralded a once in a lifetime change to enhance workers' rights. We canvassed and ensured that the law was amended positively so that, for

example, unlike Mrs Mercer, no other member should suffer detriment for taking part in industrial action. In addition, we have achieved results in the ERB, such as the extension from 3 to 6 months to lodge claims in the employment tribunals, and the reinstatement of employers having to keep records around leave, so that members can request this when they are underpaid.

Strategic legal cases

Mercer – the most important industrial action case in decades

On 17 April 2024, the UK Supreme Court handed down its ground-breaking judgment in the case of our member, Fiona Mercer, in her claims about trade union victimisation. It is the first of its kind in employment law. This judgment marks a significant legal victory for UNISON, and all UK workers, as the UK's highest court recognised that the 'right to strike' is embedded in UK law as a fundamental human right. It is the most important industrial action law case for decades.

The Supreme Court overturned the Court of Appeal's 2022 decision that UK workers should not have any protection from detriment for taking part in industrial action. The unanimous judgment refused to add words to make UK law compliant with Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), but instead, it made a formal 'declaration of incompatibility' that UK law does not meet the standards set by international human rights laws. Strike action is recognised under Article 11 ECHR as a fundamental human right that must be protected, but UK law has always been slow to recognise this. The (then) Conservative government was so strongly opposed to the earlier success of Fiona's case at the Employment Appeal Tribunal in 2021 that it intervened to try and prevent UK law from including such protections. This being even though Fiona's former employer did not want to appeal further after it lost.

This is the first time that the UK's highest court has recognised the 'right to strike' exists in UK law. The phrase is mentioned 18 times in the judgment and emphasises how important the right must now be viewed. It is also the first time a declaration of incompatibility has been made that the UK's industrial action law fails to comply with Article 11 ECHR. The Supreme Court's judgment put the UK government on notice that it must change the existing laws

to improve protections for UK workers taking industrial action. Shortly afterwards, UNISON submitted an application to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, to protect the position in case the UK government decided against changing the law to give effect to the Supreme Court's judgment and align UK law with what Article 11 ECHR requires.

It is very exciting to see that, following the General Election in July, the new Labour Government immediately included a positive response to the Supreme Court's judgment in its flagship Employment Rights Bill. When passed, the Bill will create a new statutory right to protect workers from suffering detriment short of dismissal for taking industrial action. It is very rare that a case creates a new statutory right, particularly on the sensitive topic of industrial action law, so along with our member Fiona Mercer, the whole union should feel very proud for the part it has played in making this happen for all UK workers.

Hewston – Court of Appeal agrees member was unfairly dismissed

This is an important case about how unfair dismissal law applies to cases involving alleged gross misconduct. Thousands of our members face similar types of allegations every year, but very few manage to challenge their employer successfully, as the current legal tests are notoriously harsh.

This case arose from an incident in October 2019. Andy Hewston was an inspector for Ofsted with more than 12 years of loyal service. During a school inspection Andy brushed water from the head of a Year 8 student who had been in a rainstorm. The school insinuated that this was inappropriate and referred to what happened in a wide range of complaints against Ofsted's inspection.

Sadly, Ofsted then used the school's complaints to summarily dismiss Andy, where it was alleged that he had failed to show insight or contrition and that his actions had damaged their reputation. Ofsted did not provide full details of the documents that showed the conduct was not as serious as alleged. Andy pursued a claim for unfair dismissal which was rejected by an employment tribunal (ET), as it decided that his actions undermined the trust and confidence Ofsted was entitled to expect. The case highlighted that, in unfair dismissal law, the 'range of reasonable responses' test only requires a tribunal to

assess whether a reasonable employer might reasonably have dismissed the employee in the same circumstances.

UNISON supported Andy to appeal the tribunal judgment, and the Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) overturned the ET's decision in 2023 and held that Andy had been unfairly dismissed. Ofsted then appealed to the Court of Appeal and a hearing took place in October 2024. At the end of the hearing the panel of judges indicated that they rejected Ofsted's appeal but would provide their reasons separately.

On 14 March 2025, the Court of Appeal handed down its judgment with reasons confirming that the EAT was correct to find that Andy had been unfairly dismissed, and that Ofsted had acted unlawfully. The judgment was deeply critical about the way Ofsted treated our member and explained that, as a general proposition, employers should not "bump up the seriousness" of conduct.

It also found that the way Ofsted argued Andy had shown a lack of contrition or insight was particularly unfair when it had not provided copies of relevant documents that showed he was right to question the school's reasons for complaining about him.

The case should now return to a fresh ET to decide the remedies for Andy's successful claims.

Successful Windrush Judicial Review against the last Government

On 19 June 2024, the High Court agreed with UNISON that the former Home Secretary, Suella Braverman's decision in 2023 to refuse to implement Windrush recommendations was unlawful and that she had failed to consult properly and could not justify the discriminatory impact upon Windrush victims.

By way of background, the Home Secretary's decision in 2023 not to proceed with the recommendations was made days before the Rwanda scheme to deport asylum seekers was introduced (a scheme that was separately subsequently found by the High Court to be unlawful). These recommendations were a commitment to establish a migrants' commissioner (recommendation 9), who would have been responsible for speaking up for migrants and working with the government to identify and address any systemic concerns; a strengthening of the powers of the independent chief inspector of borders and immigration

(recommendation 10), and the holding of reconciliation events for affected individuals and their families giving them the opportunity to share the impact of Windrush with senior Home Office officials (recommendation 3).

In December 2023, UNISON was granted permission to intervene in a challenge to the then Home Secretary's decision to renege on her commitment to implement three key recommendations made by Wendy Williams in her review "Lessons Learned" into the Windrush scandal. UNISON's application to the High Court was supported by evidence from UNISON member Michael Braithwaite, a London teaching assistant, who worked with children with special educational needs. Michael was a victim of the Windrush scandal which cost him his job.

TTO since Brazel

In 2022, UNISON succeeded before the Supreme Court in the case of Harpur Trust v Brazel and UNISON. The Supreme Court upheld the decision of the Court of Appeal that all part-year workers must be entitled to at least 5.6 weeks' leave with no pro-rata reduction.

Following our Supreme Court victory, the then Conservative Government enacted regulations for holiday pay for part-year, irregular-hours, and agency workers which came into effect from 1 April 2024. These regulations reversed the effect of the Supreme Court decision in the Brazel case, with it now being lawful to pay 12.07% rolled up holiday pay.

In 2024, UNISON continued to pursue Term Time Only (TTO) backpay holiday claims for thousands of members for the period prior to April 2024, including 631 claims against Barnsley Council on behalf of members who have not been paid their full holiday entitlements. Settlement negotiations are currently ongoing. In addition, recent settlements have been reached with Hammersmith and Fulham Council. Claims are also being pursued against Wigan Council, St Helens Council, Rochdale Council and Sefton Council.

Approximately 200,000 members are classified as term-time only and we will continue to fight for these members who have been deprived of the pay they are entitled to. So far, settlements across England have amounted to over £120 million for members.

Ongoing fight for equal pay

In 2024, UNISON have continued to fight for equal pay for public-sector female members across the country, where they are paid less than male counterparts for equal work. Pay disparities can arise in many different contexts and UNISON works tirelessly to pursue claims on behalf of effected members.

Building on the progress made in Coventry during 2023, a further 365 claims were filed in 2024 against Coventry Council where discriminatory work practices relating to 'task and finish' left female members worse off. This practice arises where roles typically performed by men, allow workers to finish their shifts early once set tasks are complete. This leads to an enhanced hourly rate and therefore unequal treatment when compared with women at the same grade but in different roles where this practice is not offered.

In 2024, UNISON also continued pursuing over 500 claims against the former Cumbria Council which in 2023 reorganised into Westmoreland and Furness Councils and Cumberland Council. These claims were filed in 2023 and relate to the reliability of the Single Status job evaluation that was carried out by former Cumbria Council approximately 15 years ago.

In 2024, a further 2,600 claims were also filed against Birmingham City Council in relation to task and finish disparities, unreliable job evaluation issues, and unjust job enrichment. Settlement talks continue into 2025. Approximately 300 claims have also been lodged against Southampton Council. Investigations are currently ongoing in a number of other Councils across England and Wales.

In 2024 UNISON raised 108 claims against Dundee City Council. This arose following the discovery of male bonus earning jobs which were not assessed under the Scottish Joint Council scheme. Following a process of discovery and information exchange, the Council has recently invited the union to without prejudice settlement discussions throughout the spring of 2025.

UNISON have also raised 578 claims against Fife Council following a challenge to the implementation of the job evaluation scheme in respect of a handful of claimant and comparator job evaluations. The original decision has been appealed and is due to be heard by the Employment Appeal Tribunal in September 2025. The Council is undertaking a

voluntary re-evaluation of the impacted jobs which is likely to yield results before the litigation reaches a conclusion. There may be settlement offers at this stage but at the present time the Tribunal claims remain sisted.

UNISON have now concluded settlement in long running claims against South Ayrshire Council with all UNISON members paid and claims concluded and withdrawn.

In 2019, Glasgow City Council paid compensation of around £58 million to 4000 members after the Court of Session held that the council failed to prove that the job evaluation scheme was valid. Across 2023 and 2024, a further £42 million was paid out to cover the 'period' between 2018 and the implementation of the new pay and grading system. The Council is currently undertaking the job evaluation and the issue of backpay will be addressed when this is implemented.

Agnew – getting back pay for unpaid holiday pay

UNISON won a case in the UK Supreme Court in 2023 (Chief Constable of Police Service of Northern Ireland v Agnew & UNISON) which meant employees could claim long-standing and linked holiday pay underpayments over the years because gaps of three months or more would not break the chain between underpayments.

In Great Britain, due to a change in law by the Conservative Government, back pay is limited to two years, however, it is unlimited in Northern Ireland where UNISON has supported members by lodging 845 claims against 18 respondent employers. This work continues in 2025 as we engage with members in Northern Ireland to secure the pay our members are entitled to.

Legal Advice and Representation

Employment law representation and advice for members

England and Wales

UNISON is currently pursuing employment tribunal claims on behalf of over 6,700 members. These include single and collective claims on behalf of members. Between 1 January

to 31 December 2024, over 270 Employment Tribunal cases for individual members were successfully concluded in England and Wales. Of those cases, over 250 were settled and 22 were won at a contested tribunal hearing. UNISON members recovered a total compensation of over £4.6 million during this period.

Scotland

Between 1 January to 31 December 2024 over 40 Employment Tribunal cases for individual members were successfully concluded in Scotland. UNISON members recovered a total compensation of over £427,936.51 during this period (excludes equal pay). In 2024, of the 40 successfully concluded cases, 31 cases were discrimination cases and UNISON members in Scotland recovered £239,923.60 in compensation for successful discrimination claims.

In 2024, UNISON also successfully concluded 201 discrimination cases, covering a wide range of protected characteristics including race (84), disability (92), sex (23), sexual orientation (1) and religious belief (1). UNISON members recovered over £3 million in compensation for successful discrimination claims.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, a total of 8 employment law cases successfully concluded for UNISON members in 2024. This includes 5 cases settled out of court and 3 cases won at hearing. The total amount of compensation recovered for members was £58,938.82.

Legal Services are pleased to report that these figures represent an improvement in case outcomes and compensation across the board from 2023.

Legal assistance for personal injuries and accidents for members and their families.

Alongside the comprehensive legal assistance provided to members facing employment law issues, UNISON supports members who sustain personal injuries either in work or outside of work. This part of the scheme also supports family members too with their non-work-related personal injury cases. Further details on settlements of such claims can be found in the section below.

In 2024, UNISON helped over 4,000 members and their family members with legal advice where they had suffered an accident, injury, or illness.

During this period, we successfully concluded over 1,900 personal injury cases, ensuring our members and their family members, who had sustained injury due to negligence, received the justice and compensation they deserved. In 2024, this compensation amounted to a very substantial sum over £36 million.

Additionally, the personal injury part of the legal scheme also includes initial legal advice in cases involving clinical negligence. If the case is one that our lawyers advise should proceed, then preferential private rates are offered to our members and their family members. In 2024, 301 members and 98 of their family members received advice through this part of the scheme, which delivered over £250,000 in damages.

Criminal law services

The legal scheme available to UNISON members also covers some criminal law matters.

In 2024 UNISON assisted hundreds of members with criminal law advice and representation. The scheme supports UNISON members who are in the harrowing position of defending themselves against work-related criminal allegations.

Free legal advice

Last year many members have continued to use the other valuable parts of the UNISON legal services on offer too.

Members can access initial free legal advice on matters not related to their employment. This part of the legal scheme helped almost 5000 members in 2024.

Wills and conveyancing

UNISON's legal services scheme has assisted nearly 2,500 members/family members under our wills and conveyancing service. This took the form of either free standard wills for our members, or discounted or more complex wills, as well as probate services and conveyancing services for our members and their families. In total we supported nearly

2,200 wills cases, and over 200 conveyancing matters in 2024.

Personal Injury settlements

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

Without such legal support we know our members will often feel too intimidated to pursue a claim. In a previous UNISON survey nearly two-thirds of our members confirmed this. This is particularly the case with workplace accidents and injuries, where the claim will be brought against our members' employer. This is because employers will inevitably be insured and legally represented, and they will have ready access to relevant documentation and witnesses. These are also claims where the case could well involve complex/technical legal arguments.

It is important in this situation that our members can rely on our lawyers, who specialise in this work, to ensure they get access to justice, and receive the full award they are entitled to.

This also leads to much wider benefits for our membership as a whole. We know that bringing such cases improves Health and Safety in the workplace. It acts as a deterrent to future poor working practices and is a catalyst for employers to take effective safety measures going forward to safeguard all their employees, and so also prevents future accidents/injuries occurring.

Assaults at work and other work-related accident claims

We have continued to secure compensation for members who were victims of an assault whilst at work, with members securing considerable settlements through the scheme.

Across the UK in 2024, the UNISON personal injury scheme provided 729 members with legal advice who were assaulted at work. In 137 of these cases, settlements worth over a total £2 million were secured.

In one such case, our member was working as a Support

Worker at a College in Leicestershire. She was assaulted by one of the residents and sustained scarring to her arm as a result, as well as psychological injuries. Through detailed negotiation our lawyers were able to secure £97,000 for her.

We know how important it is to help our members in this position. Therefore, we try to pursue every avenue we can for our members who suffer injury having been subjected to an assault at work. The vast majority of cases we support are through the civil courts against our members' employers. However, these cases are very difficult to pursue, and so if we are not able to run such a case, UNISON's scheme also then supports members in pursuing their claim through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority. This is a government body, which makes awards where individuals have been the victim of a crime of violence (which can include an assault at work).

Other work-related cases were also supported under our scheme in 2024. For example, we went on to secure over £150,000 for our members who sustained needlestick injuries at work; and almost £650,000 for those who suffered injury as a result of a manual handling accident. Further a total of over £4m was obtained for a significant number of our members (over 250) who injured themselves as a result of a defective workplace leading to a fall, or trip or slip at work.

One of these cases was for our member who worked for Swansea Council. He was cleaning a property for a new tenant to move into when he tripped over a steel alarm box. He very badly injured his toe, and due to ongoing complications, eventually had to have his toe amputated. After bringing court proceedings our lawyers eventually managed to settle his case for £130,000.

Serious work-related diseases

UNISON's legal services scheme provides access to specialist, expert legal advice. This enables UNISON to obtain awards for our members suffering from a range of serious work-related diseases.

We have continued to press for awards in the very difficult legal area of work-related stress. Despite the legal challenges with these types of claims, UNISON assisted 159 members who came to us for advice about their stress claims in 2024.

In the last 12 months UNISON succeeded in securing over

£120,000 for our members who suffered injury from stress and/or bullying at work. One of these cases concerned our member a community mental health practitioner. He raised concerns about the excessive workloads he had, but nothing was done. As a result, our member went off sick a number of times, but despite the clear warnings, still nothing changed when he returned to work. He was then subjected to unwarranted performance management sanctions, and finally went on to lodge a grievance, with that process taking well over a year to resolve - all adding to his stress. As his employers failed to admit liability court proceedings had to be brought by our lawyers, which ultimately lead to an award of £65,000.

UNISON's legal scheme will continue to offer advice to our members in this complex area of the law, and this highlights the fact the union is prepared to take cases that many High Street firms and 'no win no fee' solicitors will often avoid.

In addition, by way of example of some other serious work-related disease cases we have brought, we have also supported a number of members suffering from lung disease, in 2024 obtaining over £300,000 by way of damages; and helped those and their families that have tragically had to deal with the terrible diagnosis of mesothelioma. We have managed to secure nearly £700,000 in compensation in this respect.

Road traffic accidents

UNISON's legal scheme has a broad remit. It extends to cases where members and their families sustain non-work-related injuries such as road traffic accidents. The scheme has helped 349 individual members and the family of members who have sustained injuries in road traffic accidents in 2024, including assisting members who find themselves in very tragic circumstances.

One such case was for our member very seriously injured in a road traffic accident by the negligent actions of a driver, driving under the influence of cocaine. Our member sustained numerous life changing injuries, including multiple fractures as well as a brain injury and psychological injury. As a result of the court action brought by our lawyers, when liability was eventually conceded a full rehabilitation package could be put in place to help treat our member's injuries. The case was finally settled for £1.3m last year. Whilst the damages received will not turn back the clock for our member this award will play a vital role. The damages secured by UNISON will aid in both her physical and

psychological recovery and also assist with her ongoing future care and accommodation needs.

Total awards for members and their families

Across the UK in 2024, UNISON secured over £36 million in damages by way of personal injury settlements from settling almost 2000 cases.

Industrial action ballot summary

2024 was another busy year for UNISON members involved in industrial disputes, ballots were held across Local Government in England, schools and waste workers in Scotland and Higher Education.

It was also a year of huge wins for Health Care Assistants involved in disputes for fair grading and back pay with ballots, strikes and victories across the country including East Suffolk and North Essex, Leicestershire, Kettering and Northampton, South and North Tees and Swansea Bay.

The industrial Action Committee have met numerous times throughout the year to consider requests for strike pay, and have been proactive in helping branches and members ensure they have the resources for disputes, including through appeals and fundraising for branch hardship funds.

The General Election in 2024 means we now have a government willing to work with trade unions to repeal and replace pernicious anti-strike legislation, including the failed Minimum Service Levels, and preparation is underway to implement the changes which will be brought about in industrial balloting by the Employment Rights Bill, including proposals for electronic balloting and removing the participation thresholds so that trade unions can organise their own meaningful and effective dispute procedures.

Despite the thresholds, as a union we continue to improve organising outcomes during ballots and turning out members. Over 30 single-employer ballots made the turnout threshold in 2024, compared to just 12 which did not, with turnout averaging 60% in all UNISON ballots.

The Member Liaison Unit which coordinates and administers industrial ballots across the union remains committed to working with our sectors and service groups to ensure we

can secure the best outcomes for our members through industrial action and continues to work with the NEC Industrial Action Committee to produce and update guidance to ensure that members are properly supported during the difficult process of balloting and taking strike action.

UNISONdirect

UNISONdirect, UNISON's member contact centre, had its first full year as an independent operation, following UNISON taking control from UIA. The Stevenage-based call centre received 352,102 contacts across 2024 from members, branches and non-members, a two percent increase on the previous year.

A big growth area was in online contacts, rather than traditional phone calls, with over 100,000 web contacts received across the year for the first time. This includes almost 14,000 members who chose to speak to an agent via a live "webchat" box on the UNISON website. Each of these are handled by a live agent, as UNISONdirect believes that members should be able to communicate directly with a person, and not a bot or AI.

This human touch may be one of the reasons UNISONdirect's satisfaction surveys continue to show that 87 percent of members who contacted us by phone are happy or very happy with the service they received. This is an increase of 2 per cent from 2023.

This satisfaction is also reflected in the positive comments that are left by members, such as:

"I just want to say thank you to who I spoke to today, they were very understanding, empathetic and completely knowledgeable of everything they have done, they have made me feel that I haven't wasted anyone's time today. Thank you very much, carry on doing the amazing work you are doing."

"I would like to thank the call advisor he was very informative friendly and polite. I felt really supported by his mannerisms I can't thank him enough. I was very upset at the time of the call, pointing out several issues at my workplace, that are causing great concern to my life and my well-being and he supported me through that. I can't thank you enough."

In 2024, UNISONdirect triaged and completed 89 percent of all queries without needing to refer them to the branch. Branch referrals accounted for 11 percent (38,731) of our contacts.

UNISONdirect receives contacts on a wide range of issues, including 23,906 calls from members with workplace contract issues and 15,702 queries on sickness absences and sick pay. UNISONdirect also dealt with 122,407 membership enquiries, including updating personal details, which helps ensure our retention and helps organise in ballots and elections.

There for You, a unique welfare service

There for You

UNISON's charity, There for You, supports UNISON members and their families in times of unexpected financial hardship. 2024 saw the ongoing effects of the cost-of-living crisis continuing to impact members. Rising living costs and high housing costs meant that many members were forced to change their spending, cutting back wherever they could while others had to rely on increased borrowing just to make ends meet.

During 2024, we spent £857,193 helping 2,917 members: providing financial help to those who needed it most. This reflects the impact that both the increase in energy and housing costs has had, as well as general inflation. Once again, our programme of grants became a critical means of support for many of our most vulnerable members. However, none of this would have been possible without the additional financial support and donations from UNISON, and the generosity of branches, regions, and individual members.

Member feedback

"Just to say thank you so much for your efforts and kindness to make sure I have financial support from There for You. I won't forget your support. My sincere thanks to you and all the people that made it happen."

"Thank you so much, I know you will support me, you have never failed me. Your kindness and time will never be forgotten."

Grant type summary	£
Crisis payments (member has no money for food or fuel)	£700
Energy Support Grants	£168,318
Special payments including hospital travel, car repairs	£22,747
Help with essential living costs	£149,131
Housing costs	£21,774
Household items – white goods and furniture	£77,709
Disability, health, medical, wellbeing	£7,302
Household maintenance & services	£13,766
Clothing	£4,675
Priority debt including rent, mortgage, council tax, debt relief and bankruptcy	£59,015
School uniform grants	£104,775
Winter fuel grants	£209,090
Funeral costs	£9,574
Buy A Gift	£8,617
Total	£857,193

"It was so nice to receive your e-mail advising me that I was eligible for the Well Being Break funds. The prompt attention to my application for support is appreciated very much. It has been so nice to let my son know we can afford to do something special together and not have to worry how we afford it."

"This is so amazing; I cannot thank you enough. Having the rent cleared takes so much stress off."

"Thank you so much, this is truly amazing, we really appreciate this financial support. Thank you again for all your help and UNISON's."

"Thank you for letting me know. Hopefully this crisis would

never happen again, and normality would restore for my family. I'm just grateful you all were able to help when I had no one else to turn too as a single mum. I appreciate you all."

"I want to take this email as an opportunity to thank yourself for the hard work you've put in to be able to make my house a home. I'll be forever grateful. Thank you."

"I and my family are grateful to you and UNISON for the help and support given by you to us at this hard time. We thank you very much."

"I am so grateful for your response. You have no idea how much this means to us as a family. It will help tremendously."

"Thank you so much, I genuinely appreciate your help with this. I cannot be grateful enough. I appreciate that you dealt with this application so swiftly!"

"My Caseworker was fantastic in terms of processing my application for financial assistance. From gathering information to finalising the case and the services that you offer are amazing. Thank you so much for everything!"

"I am here to extend my gratitude to you and UNISON for the financial support extended towards my living expenses. Ever since I joined UNISON, it has made a great impact in my settlement in the U.K. Thank you once again."

"Seeing this email has made my day and thank you so much for your help, the wait has been worth it. It's more than I expected and will really help me cover the costs, my stress and anxiety levels are starting to come down thanks to your help. Once again, I'm very thankful."

"Thank you for your email yesterday and for the advice of the grants allocated. I am very grateful for the help at this time as it has given me the ability now to move forward in a way that would have taken me months of hardship to resolve by myself. I am overwhelmed by your assistance at this time. I'm truly grateful."

"Thank you so very much. This is a massive boost for me, and my children will be so grateful to you for this support you have provided. I really do appreciate it."

"I honestly cannot thank you enough. This good news has come at the perfect time. Honestly thank you so so so

much. I actually feel like crying."

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

A full There for You annual report is available from: thereforyou@unison.co.uk

UNISON College

UNISON College enables learning opportunities for members and training for activists, through delivering courses in person and online across the union, both in regions and branches, and nationally.

Our objectives are to ensure that activists feel confident and have the skills and knowledge to support our members and organise colleagues in the workplace. Equally, our objective is to build members' and activists' confidence, personal and professional skills, and progress in their career and their union involvement.

By working in collaboration with service groups, self-organised groups, regions and branches, UNISON College continues to equip activists with the skills and knowledge to support the organising, bargaining and campaigning work of the union as well as deliver a meaningful and specific learning offer for members relevant to their job role.

For example, our offer of CPD for members in schools (including Autism Awareness, Managing Challenging Behaviour, and Bereavement in Children and Young People) offers an opportunity for reps and organisers to engage school with support staff and a positive first impression of the union for the member; meanwhile, the experience of the course builds members' confidence and self-esteem, equipping them for future involvement in UNISON. This approach is mirrored across the service groups, with, for example, a series of study skills webinars timed to coincide with the annual intake of student nurses.

Meanwhile, we continue to work with all areas of the union to tailor our offering to complement the organising priorities and campaigns. A flexible approach to activist training,

including branch-based courses and specialised course events for specific service groups, allows us to respond to the needs of our reps in target areas. Alongside our established programme of training, we are developing training for emerging activist roles such as environmental/green reps, with Climate Crisis and Green Skills courses having been run regionally and nationally.

Activist Training

In 2024, we continued to improve the reach of the mandatory introductory training for the workplace representative, health and safety representative, and union learning representative (ULR) roles. Most notably, ULR training almost doubled – further extending our potential to advocate for and deliver workplace learning.

Activist training course	Reps attending in 2024
New Organising Stewards (stage 1 and stage 2 to reach ERA accreditation)	1986
Organising for Health and Safety (Health and Safety Reps initial training)	459
Union Learning Reps (ULRs) initial training	113
Equality training (for all reps within two years of completing initial training)	363
ERA refresher training (for workplace reps, to be completed every five years)	781
Follow-on courses (representation, negotiation skills; introduction to employment law)	551
Advanced Law courses	99
Challenging Racism in the Workplace (for reps and branch officers who undertake representation and negotiation)	95

We have 16,598 users registered on the e-learning site, of whom 6618 accessed it during 2024. We supported the Local Government service group in the creation of an e-learning module introducing the concept of insourcing, entitled 'Bringing Services Home'.

Member Learning

Over 4,000 recorded episodes of member learning took place in 2024, a 4% increase on 2023. As always, the true number will be much higher, with many instances of informal learning, in branches and regions, including lunch and learns and webinars not having been formally recorded. In addition, Scotland, Cymru/Wales and Northern Ireland continue to be able to deliver further training to members, workplaces and communities through union learning funded activities.

Our member learning programme offers a broad range of opportunities for professional and personal development to benefit members, workplaces and to effect change.

The most popular themes include:

- General skills or CPD (transferrable skills development, for example, Public Speaking Skills; Aspiring Manager: Team member to team leader)
- Wellbeing (sessions designed to foster wellbeing through developing skills and shared learning, for example: Mindfulness; Power To Be You; menopause awareness)
- IT skills (including Microsoft Office applications, Excel being most popular)
- Job-specific CPD (skills training specific to job roles or workplaces, for example, SEND in schools; maths for nurses; conflict management in social care)
- Mental health awareness (awareness raising as well as how to support in the workplace)
- UNISON College offers members access to the Staff Skills Academy+ e-learning platform; 1696 members completed courses on there in 2024.

Bursaries and Learning Grants

UNISON College operates a scheme whereby members who are undertaking study at their own expense can apply for financial support to assist them with the costs of study, such as fees, textbooks or IT. In 2024, £48,330 was awarded under this scheme; 69 members received a grant specifically to support them with their studies with The

Open University and 66 members received a grant to support them with other studies.

UNISON Living

‘UNISON Living’, is UNISON’s brand name and logo to identify our endorsed affinity Partners. Affinity Partners who have been selected through UNISON’s procurement and due diligence processes to offer added value to UNISON membership to support our membership recruitment and retention objectives.

The ‘UNISON Living’ Affinity Partners scheme is overseen by the NEC’s Services to Members Committee with Partner Contracts, relations’ and activity monitored through regular joint meetings and ‘day to day’ relations with each Partner.

Throughout 2024/25, the Partners have continued to support membership recruitment and retention activity at national, regional and branch level, committing resources through an Annual Marketing Plan (overseen by UNISON’s Communications Team) to promote UNISON Living and to reach out to members to raise awareness and engagement through UNISON’s communications channels.

The restock of the UNISON Living 0711 Leaflet has been well received by Branches as a recruitment/retention activity resource.

The incidence of UNISON Living related complaints received from Members continues to be extremely low with take up of Partner offerings continuing to grow.

The Partners’ activity has included:

- participation in Regional Membership Services Providers meetings and Webinars
- exhibiting at UNISON National Conferences and Regional events
- Dedicated Team resource to engage with Branches
- Sponsorship – including the UNISON Conference Delegate Bag to raise funds for UNISON Welfare charity ‘There for You’ and the ‘Free Prize Draw’ at UNISON NDC.

Our Partners continue to meet and work with our Regions to support recruitment and retention activity. The 5 Core Partners (see below) all provide a Team ‘field’ resource to support Regional and Branch events/initiatives.

The Free Prize Draw staged at NDC was a great success with feedback from Delegates stating that it served as an ‘ice breaker’ to introductions and conversations with the UNISON Living Partners and UNIZONE activity; 7 ‘happy’ prize winners each receiving a ‘gift card’ to the value of £200.

The Partner management information reports indicate an overall upward trend in take up of their offerings throughout 2024 with member solus emails proving to be a key factor in generating interest and engagement.

A Partners’ Focus Group, established in 2023, has met to further joint working by sharing good practice, identifying targets and directing joint resources.

The UNISON Living benefits package is the subject of ongoing review and will be the focus of the UNISON Services to Members Committee and Partners Annual Seminar to ensure it is ‘fit for purpose’ to bring value to members and the union.

The reports below represent our UNISON Living endorsed core Partners. Other partners include UNISON Travel, Vauxhall Partner Programme and Vision Express.

Exploring the market potential for new offerings to bring added value to the UNISON Living member benefits package continues to be a key priority – our ambition is to grow the benefits package offerings whilst maintaining the UNISON Living principles, trust, confidence and integrity.

Quilter and Financial Mortgage Advice

Affinity partner activity and engagement with members, branches and regions

In 2024 QFA have built on the strong relationships they have with the UNISON Branches and Regions. The depth of their relationships is demonstrated by the number of financial educational events QFA have delivered for members in 2024. In addition, they have been working collaboratively with the UNISON Pensions Unit, LAOS and HR Teams, to provide financial education and support to members and employees of UNISON.

Quilter FA continues to offer a range of financial educational events for members including participation in our UNISON College’s Financial Wellbeing programme.

The number of financial education events provided by QFA in 2024 was 392 which is a 17% increase on the previous year. 6,000 members attended the events, and QFA carried out over 5,000 individual appointments for members.

Annual marketing plan communications

QFA continues to evolve and enhance their service for members and have an active marketing campaign planned for 2025 which is underpinned by the continued support provided by the UNISON Branches and Regions.

In 2024 we delivered two solus email campaigns to members which generated a number of enquiries for financial guidance and advice.

Case studies/anecdotal accounts of member value/satisfaction – Member Feedback

“Many thanks, for your advice provided this morning via the UNISON connection.

I would have no hesitation in recommending Quilter Financial Advisers via the UNISON arrangement and found your advice clear and very reassuring.”

Unison Health and Dental Plans

Affinity partner activity and engagement with members, branches and regions

In 2024, we attended several National and Regional Conferences, including Black Workers, Higher Ed, Women's, and Health Conferences. We also supported branches and regions with online sessions or sent over promotional materials when we couldn't attend in person. This ongoing engagement helps raise awareness of the UNISON Health & Dental Plans.

Annual marketing plan communications

We've regularly sent out leaflets, adverts, and digital materials to branches and regions. We made full use of UNISON's communication channels like the U-Magazine print edition, new solus emails, and monthly e-newsletters. These have been essential in keeping members informed about the benefits available, and we plan to keep using these channels in 2025 and invest accordingly again.

Partner stats, in terms of product take-up and growth

The UNISON NHS Dental Plan saw a 13.7% increase in take-up this year, showing strong interest from members. A big part of this success comes from new marketing opportunities, like the U-Magazine solus email campaigns, print editions, and ongoing regional support. While these efforts have driven growth, they do come with extra marketing costs.

Any new products and initiatives during 2024

We didn't introduce any new products in 2024, but we're always exploring new ways to meet the needs of UNISON members. We also offer sign-up incentives and promotions to add extra value where we can.

Planned activity and resources to capture potential growth and density

Looking ahead, we'll continue investing in UNISON marketing and build on the 13.7% growth we've seen. We plan to increase our presence at more conferences and regional events, especially in areas where we see potential. We'll also keep using digital campaigns and expand the reach of our physical materials to capture new members and keep current ones informed.

Case studies and anecdotal accounts of member value and satisfaction

The feedback we've received from members has been really positive. Many members have told us that the plans are valuable and affordable. This feedback, along with the face-to-face comments we get at events, shows how the plans are making a real difference to members' well-being and reinforces our continued commitment to providing great service and value to UNISON members.

News and insight to the NHS Dental

In February 2025, the government committed to tackling 'dental deserts' by adding 700,000 new NHS dental appointments and prioritizing urgent care areas. UNISON members continue to show strong interest in joining the UNISON Health & Dental Plans and in getting the best value from their policy in terms of claiming back the costs for optician and dentist visits.

Shepherds Friendly

Affinity partner activity and engagement with members, branches and regions

We exhibited and presented at several events throughout the year, including the National Delegate Conference (NDC), Health and Women's conferences and Regional Membership Services Providers meetings and events. Engaged with members through four solus emails across 2024 generating great engagement rates.

Annual marketing plan communications

National:

- Attended multiple UNISON national conferences and regional events throughout the year
- Featured in the activist magazine
- Inserts in new member packs
- Direct contact with members through four solus emails
- Insert in UMag

Regional and Branch:

- Shared deal updates for bulletin features in several regional, sectoral and branch mailings.

Direct:

- Interacted with delegates at conference events
- Branch literature orders fulfilled as and when requested

Product uptake by UNISON members in 2024: 1441

When compared to 2023, in 2024 we saw a 118% uplift in sales, primarily driven by the opportunity to reach out directly to UNISON members through email communications.

A recap of 2024

We launched our new incentive towards the start of 2024, ISA Boost, which gives members up to £100 (+£5 for UNISON members) cashback directly into their plan (or their child's). This has seen positive uptake from the membership and was an offer people responded well to at the conferences.

- We launched our mobile app half way through the year, which makes it easier for members to manage their ISA or JISA online.

- We came to the end of our three-year strategy, where all our goals have been met. This includes our goal of reaching 120,000 members (we're now at 125k).
- Our new three-year strategy started from January, and there is a big focus on developing our product proposition further by adding to our savings and investment portfolio, and developing our platforms (such as our mobile app, and plan management systems) further.
- Launched a big brand campaign, which includes our first ever TV advert and will help increase our brand awareness nationally.
- We're going to keep making improvements to the app to help make it easier for members to manage finances.
- We also have plans of launching a new product towards the second quarter of this year, and some plans for new products towards the end of this year too.

Planned activity for 2025 to capture potential growth

- Inclusion in UMag 2025
- Four solus emails booked to promote our investment products with the UNISON membership
- Inclusion of inserts in the Activist magazine
- Inclusion of inserts in New Member Packs
- Improvements to our products and mobile app, so members can manage their investments easily on their devices

UNISON Protect, UNISON Prepaid Plus cashback card and UNISON Rewards

Affinity partner activity and engagement with members, branches and regions

- Throughout 2024, UIB have supported Local Organisers and Regional Officers at worksite events at Local Government, Health and Education worksites.
- We have attended regional councils, policy weekends, get active weekends, regional health conferences, gala and awards dinners.
- We have attended all arranged UNISON Living regional meetings/seminars.
- We regularly presented at online regional/branch seminars to members.
- We sponsored regional awards.
- In the first quarter of 2024 we attended branch AGMs, whether face to face or online (according to what was needed).

- We attended National Delegate Conference, Black Members Conference, Higher Education, Health, Police and Justice, Retired Members, Women's, Community, LGBT+.
- We continued to support branches and regions with a regular supply of product materials e.g. posters, leaflets and banners.

Annual marketing plan communications

- Rewards inserts into new member packs.
- Free £5,000 insurance inserts into new member packs.
- Attended UNISON conferences.
- Regional team supported branches and regions.
- Offers added to regional deal updates.
- Regional or branch emails about the free insurance where available.

Partner stats (in terms of product take-up and growth)

- 38,135 Free £5,000 insurance policies were issued in 2024.
- With budgets still tight and members looking for ways to get the most out of their money, UNISON Rewards saw a 17% increase in take-up in 2024.
- 798 UNISON Prepaid cards were set-up in 2024.
- There are 125 active UNISON Branch accounts of which 13 were set up in 2024.

Any new products and initiatives during 2024

- UIB successfully maintained their bronze IIE environmental accreditation and are currently working towards silver.
- Redesigned welcome emails for accident and life insurance products.
- Redesigned insurance renewal packs.

Planned activity and resources to capture potential growth and density

- Throughout 2025, the team will be working on improvements to the Rewards journey and the discounts offered to members.
- The team have worked with Blue Creation on a new conference stand, launched at UNISON Health conference – including a smoothie bike to increase engagement with UNISON members.
- The marketing team will be working on new newsletters and content to send to customers on health and financial wellbeing.

- A new website is being defined with the aim to launch in 2025 or early 2026.
- The team plans to optimise the use of new marketing tools and technology e.g. we are looking at a new tool that would send emails to our customers (with email marketing permissions), when it knows that they usually engage with our emails (e.g. in the evening or morning when they're not working). This will improve the experience for our customers as they are more likely to get the emails, when it's right and relevant for them.
- Policy paid £3,000.
- Claim received, assessed and paid within 10 working days.

"Thank you very much as this will be a huge help as I'm still off sick & it will make a big difference for me as I won't have to worry about bills this winter. Very much appreciated. Xx"

LV

Affinity partner activity and engagement with members, branches and regions

We continue to pro-actively engage with members, regions, and branches on both a national and regional level. Regional support includes attendance at regional council AGM's engaging with branch representatives, attendance at several key regional events throughout 2024 including regional policy weekends and sector conferences. In addition, this year we expanded our regional team to five full-time regional account managers across the UK to help provide additional support to branches and regions. We continued to support the UNISON National event schedule, including attendance at Black members, Women's, Community, Disabled members, Retired members, Sector conferences and National Delegate and Service Group Conferences.

In addition, we also attended regional membership services provider meetings, presented online at member regional webinars promoting member benefits available through UNISONLiving and continued to sponsor regional awards to acknowledge and recognise all the great work regarding recruitment and retention of members.

Annual marketing plan communications

We continue to invest in the UNISON marketing plan promoting our services in several key member communications including the UNISON “U” Magazine and “U” Digital including e-newsletter advertorials and banners and provided inserts promoting our discounted Car and Home Insurance into new member packs.

Responses to our adverts were really encouraging however, increasing targeted mailings e.g. at a regional level would serve to generate increased new business quote volumes and sales to aid future scheme growth.

Partner stats

Donation to UNISON Welfare “There for you” increased to over £26K in 2024.

The total number of motor policies in force declined during 2024 due to lower than planned new business sales impacted by below plan quote volumes as highlighted above.

In 2024 LV= was named by Which? as a recommended provider for Car Insurance for the tenth year in a row and the 14th time in total.

Our Comprehensive Car Insurance, Home Insurance (Home and Home plus), Pet Insurance (10K Lifetime Cover) & Travel Insurance (Premier Cover) all achieved independent Defaqto 5 Star ratings. The Star Ratings that we achieved reflect the outstanding quality of our policies and gives you confidence that LV= products offer the highest level of cover for all events.

In addition, 2024 was a standout year for Britannia Rescue (BR) with their Net Promoter Score (NPS) reaching an impressive +87.5% in October. Net Promoter Score is a metric that measures customer satisfaction and loyalty. This is a clear indication that our customers are more satisfied than ever, showing consistent customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Our agent satisfaction score reached an outstanding 96.27% (October 24). This is testament to the continuous hard work and dedication of our agents in ensuring a positive customer experience. These impressive scores

highlight the agents’ unwavering commitment to maintaining high standards of service, contributing to overall customer satisfaction and loyalty. The efforts of our agents continue to make a significant positive impact, reflecting their professionalism and dedication to excellence.

LV= Britannia Rescue was also named as the best breakdown service of 2024 by What Car?

- What Car? Highest performing breakdown service of 2024
- Highest score for promptly rescuing customers
- Highest score for fixing vehicles roadside

Products and initiatives

Developed multi-cover option for UNISON members, combining Car and Home Insurance on the one policy scheduled to go live Q1 2025.

Sponsorship

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

We also helped add a little magic

Through our chosen charity Partner Family Action, we helped raise vital funds. Over the past four years we’ve ran, walked, climbed, treasure-hunted and toy-collected our way to support many families across the UK - check out the impressive stats below:

- £1.3 million raised to support 30,000 families through FamilyLine.
- £50,000 donated to Family Action through Pennies from Heaven.
- 5,400 toys gifted through the toy appeal, bringing smiles to children’s faces

More than just numbers... Together, we’ve made meaningful impact through launching befriending and counselling services for Family Action’s free helpline, FamilyLine. In challenging times, FamilyLine offers practical guidance and emotional support to families who need it most.

UNISON Croyde Bay Holiday Resort

Croyde Bay continues to thrive, generating £2 million in revenue each year, with a profit margin of 5-7%. We reinvest any surplus in renovation projects every winter, maintain the high standards our guests expect. This winter, we weatherproofed our chalets, installed new faster EV chargers, and renovated our guest launderette.

Located in the North Devon Area of Natural Beauty (AONB), we are committed to reducing our carbon footprint. We have replaced roofs on some of our older cottages with solar panels, reflecting our commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship.

We are vigilant in monitoring planning applications and have successfully objected to schemes which threaten the natural integrity of our area.

We take pride in offering the real living wage or above, making us an attractive employer compared with other local venues. This commitment ensures that our team is compensated fairly for their valuable work.

In response to cost-of-living challenges, we have redesigned our pricing structure to ensure competitiveness within the local market. Early indications show that we are already 9% up on revenue compared to the same period last year.

UNISON Croyde Bay is open to both the general public and UNISON members. Discounts are available for low-paid UNISON members on all accommodation types and dates, via a redesigned scheme managed by our “There For You” charity.

An upgraded website and fresh branding enhances the overall guest experience.

Professional Services Unit

UNISON’s specialist unit (PSU) provides representation and advocacy to any member who is subject to an investigation by their professional unit. This includes those devolved regulators in Northern Ireland, Scotland & Wales/Cymru.

The unit has once again had an extremely busy year throughout 2024, despite pushing regulators progress and complete cases our members are facing long delays until their case has concluded. We have escalated this to regulators and to Government (the previous & current Government).

To provide some context as to the unit’s work, we currently have 900 open cases across all regions and countries.

New cases referred in over the last 3 years shows the units ongoing growth, this is reflective of the expansion of regulation and some high-profile cases which raises public awareness of the role of regulators.

New cases over the last 3 years

2022	2023	2024
274	339	466

Referrals broken down by month to show trends

Month	2022	2023	2024	2025*
January	24	35	28	33
February	33	27	47	
March	41	35	48	
April	31	24	28	
May	25	33	29	
June	29	39	42	
July	27	31	47	
August	25	32	41	
September	26	30	30	
October	32	40	48	
November	44	35	41	
December	18	31	37	
Total	355	392	466	33

*up to 24 January 2025

Referrals broken down by region and country

Interim order hearings (IOH)

These are urgent hearings for which UNISON members would receive a maximum of seven days' notice of this. As a result, by the time members have contacted the branch and subsequently the region, we normally have 1-2 days to explain the process to the member, prepare our submissions and advocate for them at a hearing. We undertake these on a 'without prejudice basis', as often the branch or region haven't been able to complete their membership checks. If someone is unrepresented, they are more likely to be suspended and if they are an eligible member this is more difficult for us to pull back from. Once again, we have seen an increase in those cases.

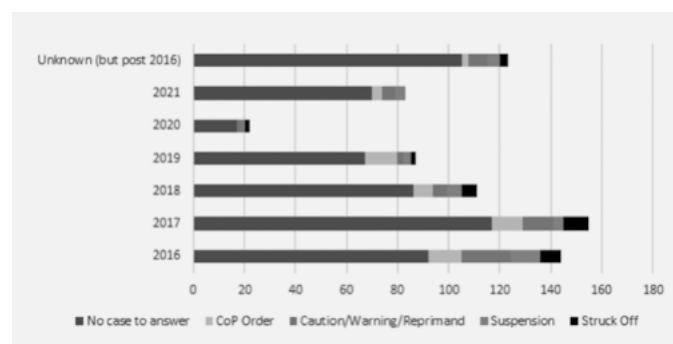
Interim Order Hearings	
2023	2024
79	101

More and more cases are managed internally by the team, the use of external solicitors has consistently reduced over the last few years concurrently with the expansion of the team. This ensures that members receive continuity in representation from the point of referral until the case concludes.

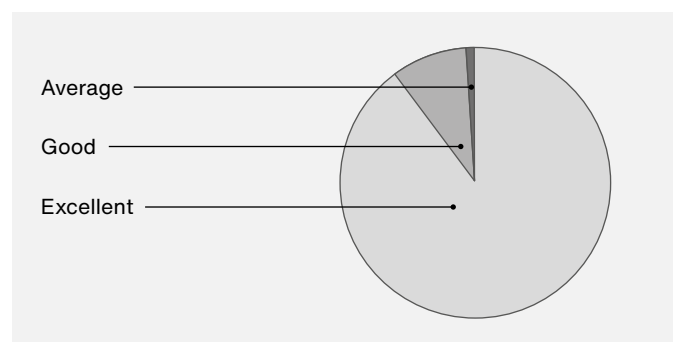
Referral year	2022	2023	2024
Thompsons Scot	25	16	49
Thompsons (Eng NI & C&W)	120	44	
Totals	145	60	49

We have also introduced member feedback following the closure of a case. The unit has received excellent feedback from members based on their lived experience of our representation.

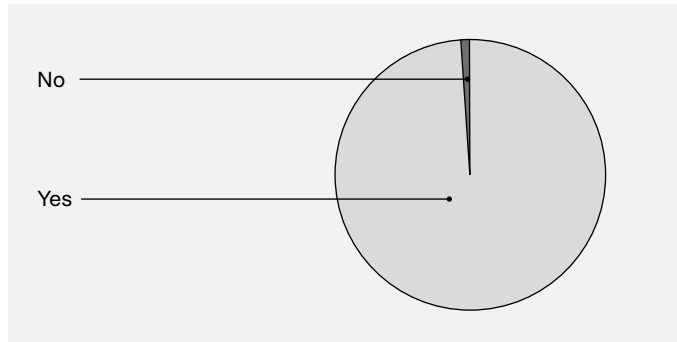
Graph to show main outcomes of closed cases since 2016



How would you rate the outcome or result of your case from what your case officer explained could happen?



Would you recommend UNSON's Professional Services Unit to a friend, family member or colleague who needed representation?



Appendix one

UNISON membership figures by region

Line count figures by UNISON Region for 2024
(full members)

Region	2024 Full members
Eastern	88,000
East Midlands	84,750
Greater London	121,250
Northern	73,750
Northern Ireland	52,250
North West	182,750
Scotland	161,750
South East	101,750
South West	80,000
Wales	85,000
West Midlands	109,750
Yorkshire & Humberside	128,750

These figures do not include retired members

Appendix two

Motion 9 from 2022

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

- i. The number of Black members on the National Executive Council;
 - ii. The number of NEC sub-committee chair or vice-chair positions held by Black member.
- The director of the Executive Office therefore reports:
- The number of Black members on the NEC =10 (seven women and three men).
 - The number of NEC Strategic Committee Chairs who are Black =0.
 - The number of NEC Strategic Committee Vice Chairs who are Black =2

