

# For Public Services



**PUBLIC  
WORKS:**

UNISON Scotland  
Local Government  
Manifesto  
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# INTRODUCTION

Scotland faces many challenges. We believe that tackling poverty and inequality to make Scotland fairer is the key to overcoming these challenges.

The services provided through local government are central to the quality of life of our citizens and the economy.

There is a growing body of evidence that fairer, more equal societies perform better on a range of indicators including crime, health and education.

Local government has a crucial role in reducing both inequality and the impact of inequality.

UNISON welcomes the fact that elections to local government are no longer overshadowed by the Scottish Parliament election. We hope this election will bring a much-needed focus on the importance of local government and the range of essential services it provides.

Everyday all of us use the services provided by local government. Many people don't even notice them: we take them for granted.

These are tough times for local government workers. In the space of a year, the number of people working to deliver council services has declined by over thirteen thousand.

Workers are also facing a pay freeze at a time of rising costs. The cuts are hurting. But you can't cut your way to better services. There is still a great deal of work that needs to be done.

UNISON believes that through the principles of Democracy, Fairness, Excellence, Partnership and Investment, local government can support our communities through this crisis - and lead the way out of the crisis through investment in those communities.



Lilian Macer,  
Convenor



Mike Kirby,  
Scottish Secretary

**PUBLIC  
WORKS:**

**UNISON**  
*Scotland*

# REFORM

Local government as we know it has evolved due to the failure of markets and private sector to meet the needs of the people. The infrastructure required both to support business and people to achieve their potential required co-ordination, local control and financial investment. While the well off could buy many things for themselves, infrastructure like roads, water supply and sewerage needed coordinated action and investment. As our understanding of disease began to grow it became obvious to even the wealthy that it was in their own self interest to ensure that everyone had clean water to drink and wash in and that waste was dealt with. The fire service and the police services all grew from recognising that we need to organise and pay to provide services in a local area. Not only is it cheaper if everyone pays towards services, but everyone suffers when others aren't covered. A street where only half the homes were signed up to receive a fire service would be a street where every home would be at risk. The vermin attracted to a street where only half the bins are emptied would be a problem for everyone.

This election should be about how local government can meet the needs of local people during this economic crisis and lead the way forward to a fairer Scotland. We believe that local government can be a key driver of economic recovery by both delivering services and providing the stimulus to support the private sector. Far from crowding out private investment the public sector supports business. The market has consistently failed to deliver the infrastructure required for a successful economy: public transport, care services, roads, an educated and healthy population, a fair and binding legal system - all require public investment and direction. Much of the debate about local government in recent years has focused on boundaries and structures and a search for one size fits all solutions. Despite frequent media comment that Scotland is "over-governed" we have the smallest number of councils and councillors per head of population in Europe. Our councils are already large by international standards. We believe that the route forward should be decided in communities through proper consultation with users and staff.

Sadly, the same tired old solutions are being promoted: privatisation, shared services and increased centralisation of services. Devolution should not just be about moving power from Westminster to Holyrood, decisions should be made in communities. This is why local government evolved. Private companies could not deliver in the 19th century, privatisation was a disaster under the Tories and it will not deliver the services we need in the 21st century. As councillors in Edinburgh recently discovered, once the business case is properly scrutinised public delivery offers value for money and accountability to communities.

## UNISON'S FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

- **DEMOCRACY:** Accountability and the meaningful involvement of users and staff - rather than the market - will provide the services the public want
- **FAIRNESS:** Essential to build a fairer society both in delivering services and as a model employer
- **EXCELLENCE:** Should be the aim of all Scotland's public services. We should be the country others look to, to see what can be achieved
- **PARTNERSHIP:** Creating the joined up working essential to meet the complex challenges Scotland faces without costly and disruptive reorganisation
- **INVESTMENT:** Essential to support communities in this economic crisis and lead the way out through growth and employment



## VALUE FOR MONEY

Public services offer great value for money. A small pick up for domestic waste would cost about £45 per week from the private sector, or £2,340 a year. This does not include the time and cost of getting the rubbish others leave on the street picked up. Public refuse collection also means that all the refuse is collected and other people's unwillingness to pay doesn't lead to the spread of vermin and disease.

Average private school fees in Scotland are about £8,200. Even these costs would rise if only the private sector was available. The public sector trains teachers, school inspectors, and the exams system. Of course, some may argue "I don't have children so that doesn't benefit me". However they will themselves be products of the school system - and society needs a steady supply of educated young people for the future.

Taxes offer excellent value for money. Public delivery means economies of scale and prevents shareholders taking profits out of the pot. Democratic control

allows users a clear say in how services are run. The average household receives more than £10,000 a year in benefits and services.

Services have to be paid for. Many are "free at the point of use" but they are not free. The fairest way to fund services is through taxation. The tax system must be a fair one where all forms of wealth are taxed and everyone pays their fair share. While most tax and benefits legislation is reserved to Westminster, council tax is devolved. The failure of successive Scottish Governments to either reform council tax or introduce a fair replacement is harming local government. Although only about 20% of local government funding comes from the council tax, it was the only tax controlled by local authorities. Until that is they were forced into the current freeze. This limits their choices when they are facing budget cuts and is leading to cuts in services and the introduction of or increases in charges for the services that remain.

The tax system can be an important tool in reducing inequality. The fairness of a tax cannot be measured in isolation. Its role alongside all the other taxes needs to be considered. Property is a significant part of the wealth of an individual. Failure to tax it increases inequality. It means that those who can buy



Photo: Paul Box

more property can move more of their wealth into property to reduce their tax liabilities. Multiple home ownership can lead to other problems, like reducing the number of homes available for others to live in. Second and third homeowners create considerable problems in many of Scotland's rural areas making homes unaffordable for many who want to live there full-time. As less council tax is paid on second homes, they reduce the income available to councils and contribute to making local businesses and schools unsustainable, as villages have reduced permanent inhabitants.

If the overall aims of taxation are to raise money for services and to reduce inequality, then taxing property is important. We believe the best way to use a property-based tax, as part of an overall system, is through local government. The link to local government services is clear. A property tax is simple to collect, local authorities can easily identify all the properties in their area and so it is hard to avoid. The wealthiest people tend not to move to small high-rise flats in poor areas to avoid paying council tax on large houses in smart areas. Property cannot be moved abroad or hidden in a tax shelter.

Contrary to much of the debate around property versus income taxes, property values are a reasonable indicator of wealth. There are fairer and less complex solutions to the small minority of homeowners who find themselves income poor

while property rich than abandoning property tax. Simply unfreezing the council tax is not the solution. Workers in both public and private sectors are facing pay freezes and increased costs. Ordinary people cannot afford, and should not be expected to, pay for a crisis not of their making. What local government needs is a fairer property tax.

UNISON believes a fairer local property tax is achievable using a new banding system with a wider range of top and bottom bands and a change in the multiplier rate between bands to make system fairer. Councils should gain the power to set different rates for second homes, regular and frequent revaluation to match wealth with bills. Council Tax Benefit should be overhauled to make it more accessible and fairer to those in work.

In the mean time, the ongoing council tax freeze is depriving local authorities of desperately needed revenue. Council Tax Benefit needs radical overhaul but the freeze in the council tax means that the money the Westminster government pays to councils in this benefit is also frozen. This saves money for the UK government at the expense of local authorities. Making charges for services is far less fair than raising taxes. The council tax freeze provides a real terms tax cut for the wealthiest homeowners at the expense of vital services, disproportionately benefitting the wealthy and leading to increased charges for a range of services hitting those on lower

# INVESTMENT & EQUALITY

The council tax freeze significantly limits the power of local government to make spending choices. None the less councils can still play a substantial role in investing in their communities by maintaining jobs in service delivery, and through infrastructure investment. Scotland's school stock still needs substantial rebuilding and repair and there are a range of opportunities in energy generation through renewables like solar and wind power. Borrowing for investment, is an essential part of financing public services. While local government has the power to do so all post devolution Scottish Governments' strategies have been to ensure that PPP is "the only game in town".

UNISON has a long-standing opposition to the disastrously expensive Public Private Partnership infrastructure schemes. There have been many name changes through successive governments: Private Finance Initiative (PFI), Public Private Partnerships (PPP), Non Profit Distribution (NPD) - but the core problems remain. Our opposition has been vindicated by report after report. Despite the Scottish Government's rhetoric on this issue, PPP continues to be used through the Hub and an array of Non Profit Distributing (NPD) schemes being taken forward by the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT). The government's Spending Review of 2011 and Draft Budget for 2012-13 detail a £2.5 billion pipeline of new NPD projects.

There is a serious risk to future public finances if government forces local authorities to proceed with public projects - such as building schools- using the NPD version of PPP. There have been strong concerns that at a time of tightening public finances, the repayments on these projects will put severe pressures on budgets for some councils. Much more needs to be done on the alternatives in Scotland. Some of them require amendments to Treasury rules including new definitions of public expenditure in line with European models. Off balance sheet incentives inherent in the current block grant system and Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) also need reform. Local Authorities should make use of their borrowing powers to invest and explore routes like Tax Increment Financing and bond issues rather than wasting more money on discredited PPP schemes. Councils do not need to wait for new powers but the Scottish Government must provide funding on a level playing field basis.

incomes hardest. Band H households are saving £441 per year while Band A households only save £147 a year.

Campaigners have highlighted examples such as:

- New service charge of £1 per meal to housebound and elderly residents: a meal a day costs £260 per person a year.
- New charge of £2.50 per trip for pensioners and adults with learning difficulties using day care facilities: £650 per annum for a person going five days a week.
- New service charge £20 per week (£1,040 per year) for Housing Support Service clients.

Community facilities are closing or reducing their opening hours. Children are sharing school books and teachers are buying supplies from their own pockets. Public service workers have had their wages frozen and face further attacks on their terms and conditions. The council tax freeze does not offset these wage cuts. Local authorities provide essential services and must have adequate funding to deliver.

The council tax freeze has been accompanied by the reintroduction of ring fencing of certain items of expenditure. Apart from the wisdom of these individual commitments UNISON believes that ring fencing is wrong in principle. Expenditure decisions should be made locally in response to local needs. Together, the council tax freeze and ring fencing undermine local democracy.

# INTEGRATED SERVICES

Local government should generally deliver services with their own directly employed workforce and facilities. This delivers the integrated, cost-effective and universal services the public need.

The Scottish public service ethos has a proud history. It is valued by the public and should be maintained and strengthened. Quality public services are the mark of a decent society. Renewed investment in recent years in Scotland's public services has made a real difference to people's lives, strengthened our communities and boosted the economy. Every pound spent by local government creates a return of £1.64 in the local economy. Cutbacks in public services will damage communities and local economies. UNISON's Public Works campaign has highlighted the excellent value for money that local government services deliver. Prosperity and sustainability depend on further investment in and by local government, to support recovery from the economic crisis - instead of targeting cuts at those who did not cause the crisis and are most affected by it.

Lessons have been learned from the disasters of privatising schools cleaning and catering services. Most have since been returned in-house and UNISON will strongly oppose any renewed attempts within the public sector to contract out work and privatise on the flawed premise that this would lead to savings. Edinburgh City Councillors decision to reject the flawed privatisations plans for their refuse collection and property services was taken because direct delivery was the best option. The lowest price is rarely the best value for money. Experience shows that such ruthless cost cutting leads to reduced services, poorer conditions for staff and the cutting of corners in vital areas like school dinners, care services and homes, with potentially lethal consequences. A delivery of microwavable meals once a month does indeed provide food and is much cheaper than a traditional meals-on-wheels service. But this cannot compare with a daily visitor to check on someone's well-being, it provides no human interaction, nor does it treat human beings as people of any worth. UNISON is proud of the work the union has undertaken in opposing such privatisations and in securing the return of contracts back in-house and in the ending of the two-tier workforce in PPP and other contracts.

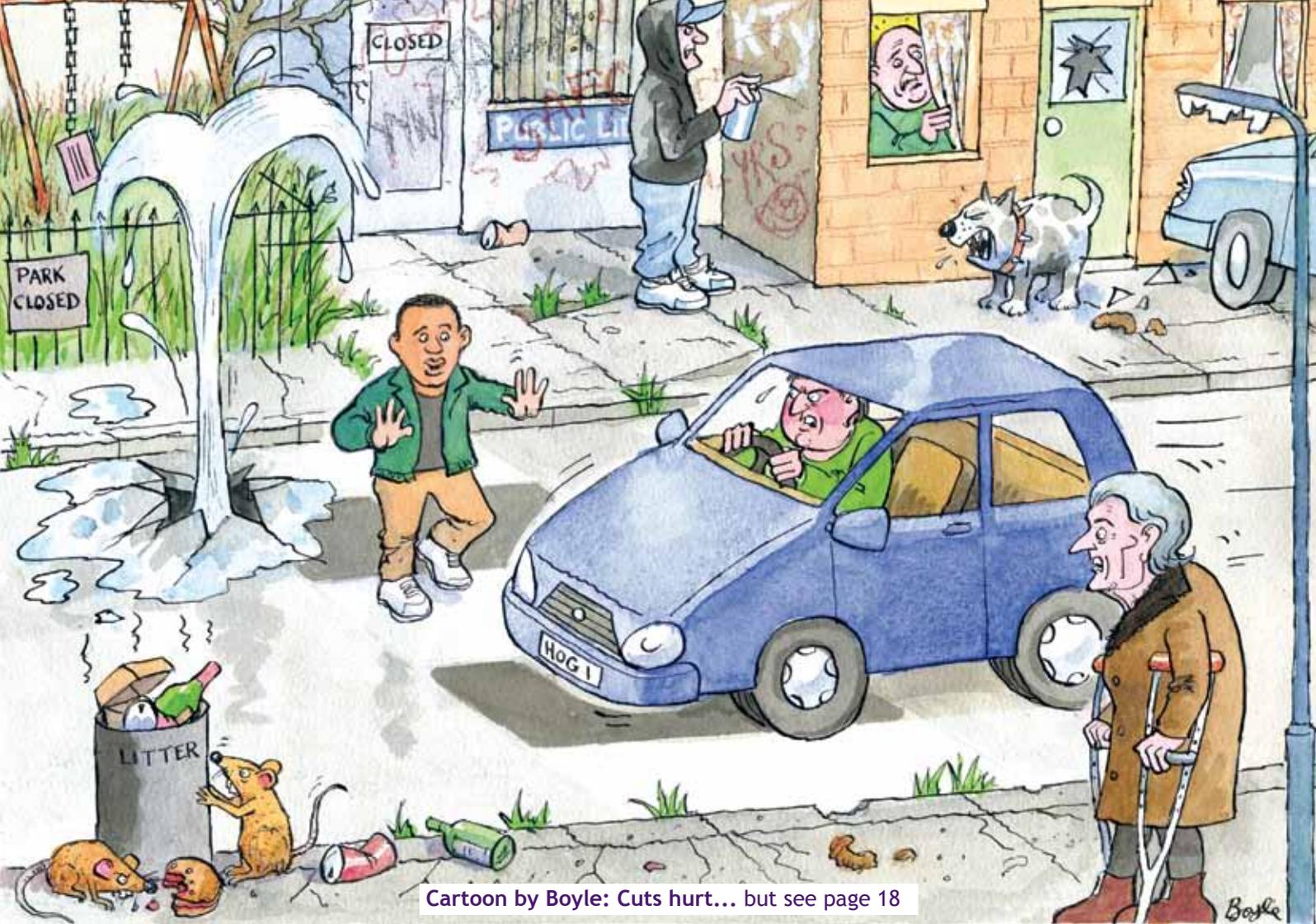
Some local authorities have set up of arms lengths bodies such as Limited Liability Partnerships and Leisure Trusts transferring services and staff out of

direct local government control. These have done little to improve service delivery and have weakened democratic control over services, reducing the ability of local people to scrutinise spending. Such bodies are not subject to Freedom of Information Legislation. Our belief is that organisations delivering services must be open to effective scrutiny. All bodies, be they public or private, who receive public money should be subject to Freedom of Information Legislation.

Increasing financial pressure has encouraged some local authorities to discuss the idea of sharing services. UNISON supports partnership working and believes public sector organisations should make the most of opportunities to work more efficiently and effectively. Experience of shared services projects has shown there are many downsides - including centralisation, the loss of jobs with resulting damage to local economies, and the loss of local accountability. The evidence is that sharing of services can cost money in the short-term, due to the need to invest in new processes and systems, accommodation and IT. Long-term savings also frequently prove elusive. The National Audit Office suggests it takes an average of five years before any savings materialise. UNISON is also concerned that some proposals may include privatising services via sharing with a private provider. This risk terms and conditions for the workforce and lead to relocations and further job losses.

International examples show shared services resulting in service dislocation and an increase in real transaction costs. Frequently service users find themselves caught up in a complex system that fails to deliver the service they require. In rural areas the centralisation of services can mean that some communities become unviable. Loss or relocation of jobs can lead to loss of trade for local businesses, and to school closures.

Many shared service schemes have a surface appeal due to the promised savings, but when detailed business plans are produced, often a very different picture emerges. Engagement with trade unions is essential in examining the many implications, for affected services and for the workforce. Those delivering services have the knowledge and understanding to assess whether proposals are realistic or if they have the potential to seriously damage the services involved. Any moves towards



Cartoon by Boyle: Cuts hurt... but see page 18

shared services should be considered on a case by case basis rather than adopting shared services as a general model. What is clearly emerging is that when councillors scrutinise these so-called business cases for change, they do not add up. The plans for IT in the Clyde Valley and the Edinburgh waste disposal plans are just two examples where proper scrutiny has revealed the problems in these plans.

Scotland cannot afford to waste more money on costly schemes of this nature. We are in favour of working with employers on how best to improve services and make efficiency savings, based on the evidence of what does and does not work. This will involve examining services from the perspective of service users rather than the creation of public service "factories" far removed from delivery.

UNISON is supportive of an increased role for voluntary and community organisations, and staff representative bodies in working with elected representatives to influence planning and delivery of local services. This cannot be achieved without appropriate resources. Although financial resources are crucial, it also requires politicians and public service workers developing listening skills, the skills to get people together to discuss issues, and to ensure that all voices are heard, not just the best educated, wealthiest or the loudest.

## CUTS

Local authorities face substantial budget cuts. Sometimes this results in a high profile closure of a building or service. However many departmental budgets are being salami sliced. Such cuts can have huge impacts on a service but attract less attention. Salami slicing places massive pressure on those still in work as they attempt to maintain service levels with less staff and resources. Services like environmental health, trading standards and planning departments are under massive pressure as their budgets are sliced. They perform vital roles in protecting their communities.

Planning departments protect communities from unsuitable developments, in the face of enormous pressure from well-funded businesses often trying to build on greenfield sites. They also support people to improve their own properties without falling out with their neighbours. They play a leading role in growing local economies - vital during this economic crisis. Environmental health is an essential service, safeguarding us from a range of health problems. Trading standards staff work hard to protect us from unscrupulous traders. All those services protect local businesses from undercutting by those who aim to profit by not following the rules.

# HOUSING

If we are to reduce inequality in Scotland then improving housing brings a range of positive outcomes. Housing has a crucial role to play in improving the health and wellbeing. Tackling dampness, poor heating and overcrowding will bring immediate improvements. Reducing the costs of housing directly increases disposable incomes. Building new homes and improving current housing will also boost the economy by creating high quality jobs. Improving and greening the current housing stock will help ensure we can meet our duties under the Climate Change Act.

Council housing should play a key role in the provision of affordable housing as it delivers a democratic accountability between tenants and landlords. Through their councillors, tenants can influence the development and management of their housing.

UNISON Scotland opposes large-scale stock transfers of council housing as has happened in Glasgow and a number of other local authorities. These transfers remove democratic accountability from social housing and result not only in the disenfranchisement of local councillors but also of their constituents.

Although UNISON Scotland welcomes the increase in council house building in Scotland - with some councils now building their first council homes in 20 or 30 years - more needs to be done. A key issue for affordable housing is the investment required to bring existing housing stock up to a decent standard as well as providing funding for new housing. UNISON Scotland supports the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) which aims to bring all social housing up to a reasonable standard by 2015. However the level of investment required is estimated at around £1 billion due to backlogs of repairs and improvement requirements. As things stand more than 1.4 million homes fail to meet that standard. UNISON Scotland believes that direct investment into council housing is the quickest and cheapest method of reaching SHQS.

One of the drivers of the large scale stock transfer process was the offer of historic housing debt being written off for those authorities where tenants voted for transfer. UNISON Scotland believes there should be a level playing field when it comes to affordable

housing investment, including debt write-off. Another aspect of funding which penalises councils is the amount awarded for new affordable housing. While councils can access a maximum of £30,000 per unit, housing associations can access up to £40,000 per unit. UNISON Scotland would like councils to have access to the same level of funds as any other social housing provider.

Further, long term investment is required for affordable housing. The Scottish Government set up an Innovation and Investment Fund for 2011/12, where councils and Registered Social Landlords such as housing associations competed against each other for limited affordable housing investment. The funding framework for future years is unclear, making longer term planning very difficult. UNISON Scotland would like to see a longer term approach to funding affordable housing such as three year budgets for councils. This would give them the opportunity to plan ahead and implement their local housing strategies.

UNISON Scotland welcomed the removal of the right to buy for all new social housing. We believe this should encourage councils to build more affordable housing. An expansion of democratically accountable council housing with new, more environmentally friendly and better-designed housing could lead to an expansion in the social base of its tenants. This could give many more people a wider choice for meeting their housing needs than has been the case over the past few years.

UNISON Scotland supports the call for higher environmental and design standards for all new housing. We believe such an approach would produce more sustainable housing and also lead to a reduction in heating costs, which would lessen the problem of fuel poverty. UNISON Scotland has campaigned for many years on the need to tackle fuel poverty within Scotland and the setting of new environmental and design standards could make a major contribution to tackling this issue.



# CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges we face in Scotland and globally. UNISON members played a key part in achieving Scotland's groundbreaking Climate Change Act. To deliver on its ambitious targets will require a concerted effort throughout society. Local authorities (and all other public bodies) have statutory duties to act in the way best calculated to contribute to delivery of the emissions reduction targets; in the way best calculated to deliver any statutory adaptation programme; and in the way that they consider most sustainable. These climate change duties should mean that local authorities will lead by example in areas including energy efficiency, procurement (including food), transport and workplace policies. Scottish Government guidance says that it is crucial to mainstream climate change action into all business processes and functions. UNISON is calling for all councils to negotiate green workplace agreements with recognised trade unions.

UNISON has long argued for a wide range of environmental initiatives including cutting energy waste, supporting renewable energy sources and making more efficient use of water resources. Our

"Food for Good" charter for the public sector states that: "Food should be fresh, prepared locally and sourced locally where possible. Mains-fed water coolers should be provided, minimising the use of bottled water."

Local authorities are well placed to lead and support the creation of green jobs in local communities in the private, voluntary and public sectors. There are opportunities in all areas of Scotland. The green economy is not just about the countryside. Cities, towns and rural communities have the potential for job creation around energy generation, recycling and energy efficiency measures including home insulation. The financial crisis must not be used as an excuse to drop or downgrade actions to tackle climate change. The costs of not acting are far greater than the costs of acting now. Much action on climate change can benefit other policy objectives such as on fuel poverty and health. Energy efficiency, active travel and green workplaces can also all contribute to more efficient as well as more environmentally friendly public services. The public sector has to lead by example.

# EDUCATION

UNISON Scotland is committed to the modern comprehensive principle rooted in our belief in a decent society. Every child should have a genuinely equal chance of the best education in its local school. A whole range of professional, technical and administrative staff, not just teachers or lecturers, ensure that education in Scotland achieves a high standard. An investment in that team is an investment in our children's future and a failure to invest in that team is to risk blighting our children's prospects

## EARLY YEARS

The provision of integrated services that provide high quality education, childcare and additional support to our youngest citizens and their families is instrumental in reducing the effects of child poverty and supporting the best outcomes for children in the future. UNISON fully supports the principles imbedded in Getting it Right for Every Child and the Early Intervention Strategy. We must ensure that there are the appropriate resources for delivery.

There is a strong economic case for universal childcare. The high cost of childcare for the under fives is a major barrier to work for many mothers. The Quebec Government has found that its investment in childcare (reducing the cost to parents to \$7 per day) was self-financing because of the increase in taxation from the number of women returning to work. We believe that publicly funded and delivered childcare will support children to achieve their full potential and make work pay for parents.

UNISON believes that these services should be made available to all young children giving them the best possible start in life and that fully trained and valued staff should deliver these services. Nursery nurses are the early years professionals. Their qualifications cover working with children from birth to eight years. It includes theory and principles of children

as active learners and child development (physical, emotional and social). Those who wish to take on more responsibilities can embark on further qualifications. Achieving the BA in Childhood Practice or the SVQ Level 4 qualifies staff to manage early years establishments. All are involved in continuing professional development. All facilities should be led by someone with that level of qualification, not necessarily a teacher.

## SCHOOLS

Schools should remain under the control of local authorities to ensure the best balance between local democratic control and economies of scale. Local authorities are best placed to manage education provision, capital spending, the procurement of goods and the provision to schools of support services such as social work and educational psychologists.

Parents can take up the opportunity to be involved in their children's education. Local authorities support parent councils by providing training and development to members.

Our experience shows us that moving staff out of local authorities leads to a reduction in wages and conditions for staff. Low paid women in particular suffer. UNISON believes that a national set of terms and conditions is the best way to protect staff and the services they deliver.

Further steps need to be taken to gain stronger recognition and integration of the work of all school staff into the life of education establishments; the qualifications, career pathways and personal development of all staff; and to consider the potential implications of this work for pay and conditions. Past discrimination on equal pay needs to be recognised and provision made to ensure local authorities make provision to meet their equal pay obligations.



UNISON Scotland has consistently advocated developing a national framework of job roles, to ensure proper recognition for the role and responsibilities of classroom assistants, revisiting the job evaluation of classroom assistant roles and carrying out equal pay audits using a non-discriminatory job evaluation system.

Teachers' job roles are once again under scrutiny. The progress made through the introduction of the roles of classroom assistants is under threat. A Scotland wide training and qualifications framework for education staff should be put in place to ensure a path for career development and progression. The development of a new 'Support for Learning' Higher National Certificate, to develop and promote the role and progression of classroom assistants will support this aim. Forcing these roles back on to teachers in order to save money will not support improvement in the education provided to our children. We should look to Finland for inspiration, not Sweden or the USA. Finland consistently tops world rankings for both the achievement of their ablest students and across all levels of ability.

A system of registration for classroom assistant jobs in Scotland should be developed, to raise standards and promote their education and training. The General Teaching Council is not an appropriate body to carry out this work.

UNISON Scotland welcomed many of the proposals of the Additional Support for Learning Act, but for these aims to be fully realised schools must be adequately resourced to deliver them. Staff need to be properly trained and appropriately remunerated for developing new skills and taking on more responsibilities. Increasing pressure is being placed on staff to undertake roles in relation to the administration of medicines, intimate care and procedures for which staff do not have the appropriate training or qualifications. There are increasing concerns for the safety of children with complex medical and support needs when there are no qualified medical staff in their schools.



## LEISURE TRUSTS AND LIBRARIES

Local government provides many of the services that make life fun: parks, museums, leisure centres and libraries. Some local authorities have shifted many of these services into leisure trusts, claiming that this will make it easier for them to find other sources of income and protect them from cuts. There is little evidence that this is the case. Glasgow Life, the city's leisure trust has had to make savings of £10.2 million over 3 years since 2010. UNISON believes that services should return to direct local authority control.

As the recession has hit family incomes, people have cut back on buying books and given up private gym membership, relying on libraries, museums and parks for free leisure and recreation. But across Scotland museums and libraries, whether in a trust or under direct local authority control, are cutting opening hours and outreach work. Exhibitions have been scaled back and jobs are being lost.

Schools and colleges also use museums, libraries and sports centres as a resource for trips to enhance the

curriculum in specific areas. Cuts in provision will therefore impact directly on schools and children's educational achievement in the long run. Students and pupils also visit as individuals to enhance their own learning or gain extra practice. In the case of libraries for many people, they are their only place for quiet study or access to computers and the internet.

Museums and libraries are attempting to cover for shortfalls by introducing volunteers. This overlooks the reality that many of the jobs in this field require years of professional training and development. Librarians are skilled information professionals. Museums have a range of technical staff including historians, archivists and restoration experts. Hosting a school group or taking exhibits out to community groups requires knowledge of your subject and the skills to match that with the requirements of the group and, particularly in schools, the ability to present that information at the appropriate level for the range of interest and knowledge in the audience.

Local government came into being because voluntary provision did not work. Volunteering is an excellent way of people supporting their community and sharing knowledge, but it in no way replaces the role of reliable, trained, skilled and accountable staff.

# CARE SERVICES

Care services are essential for the quality of life of Scotland's citizens. They support both the recipients of care and their carers. Despite the rhetoric about listening to users, care service models continue to be designed and imposed from above. Plans for integration are at a range of stages. Options being looked at include the transfer of services from health to local government and vice versa. While business plans are being drawn up and consultants are selling a range of schemes, private providers are queuing up to see what profits can be made. Users and staff are not being consulted. A top down approach will not bring about changes in service delivery needed to meet the challenges we face.

UNISON is in favour of flexible and responsive services focused on meeting the needs of service users. Local authorities must develop a coherent strategy for care services that reverses the cuts in funding, staffing levels and increasing service charges. Only 40 per cent of care is now provided directly by local authorities. The crisis created by Southern Cross shows clearly, why the privatisation of services must be halted and full cost recovery introduced for the voluntary sector. We believe that social care should be provided by well-trained, qualified and appropriately paid staff, able to provide the highest quality of care.

Social care procurement policies must not raise expectations that major expenditure savings can be compatible with maintaining and improving quality in services. Procurement policies must ensure that care provision is comprehensive preventing cherry picking by the private sector. The drive for savings risks creating a race to the bottom in terms of quality of provision, staff numbers and the wages paid to those who carry out these essential tasks.

The Scottish Government issued guidance states explicitly that it aims to sustain a 'mixed economy' in care across in-house, third and private sector providers and states the view that procurement should be a way of generating efficiency in the face of declining budgets. In a welcome change from its draft form, the guidance does contain explicit mention of the need for local authorities to pay heed to the Section 52 guidelines aimed at preventing a two-tier workforce, and to TUPE regulations in the event of staff transfers. However, implementation is patchy.

The guidance talks of the sharing of risk. This is by definition more difficult with private providers. For example, it is extremely unlikely that any risk assessment by local authorities utilising Southern Cross had factored in the demands of unaccountable sovereign wealth funds. The use of care homes by private providers either for property speculation or as a generator of cash for use in other ventures adds a level of unpredictability to the sector that is not present in in-house delivery.

## FREE PERSONAL CARE

UNISON welcomed the decision to deliver free personal care to Scotland's elderly population. However the initiative is under-resourced and is heavily reliant on the traditionally poorly-funded care sector. In recent years the balance of care has changed with a shift to more care at home. There is a need for more clarity in calculating the cost of free personal care. More should be done to establish how well personal care is working in practice, and whether it is delivering what was promised. The work of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS) in registering and inspecting care homes requires a new emphasis on direct physical inspection.

We must back up public statements of support for community-based health care with the financial resources. Terms and conditions for voluntary-sector staff are lagging behind their role and responsibilities and resources are often project based, time limited and insecure.



## DIRECT PAYMENTS/ PERSONALISATION

Disabled people are entitled to make a positive choice to access direct payments where this is the most appropriate method of service delivery.

However, it should be recognised that direct payments are not a substitute for other flexible and responsive public services, and are not appropriate for all care service users needs. Direct payments must complement a range of public services and must not be used to cover for inadequacies in public provision. It is inappropriate for direct payments to be used to cover for shortages in other services where the disabled person's preference is not for a direct payment. Nor should the way provision is funded be seen as a choice between direct services or direct payments. For a real choice to exist facilities must be maintained for those who decide not to take direct payments.

Where direct payments are the most appropriate method of providing services, and are the choice of the service user, the payment must be set sufficiently high to cover the cost of a decent level of pay, training, and holidays, and to enable that person to fulfil their other responsibilities as an employer. In our view, this is not the case at the present time.

## REGISTRATION

We believe that all staff who are involved in carrying out tasks which can substantially impact on patient health or welfare should also be regulated to ensure protection of the public and the continued maintenance of high standards of care. UNISON Scotland recognises that there needs to be a system supporting the development of flexible, multi-skilled staff working across traditional professional boundaries and across specific care settings.

UNISON believes in shared standards of competency, fitness and conduct. We support the development of a collaborative framework between regulators in both health and social care in order to extend the protection of regulation without setting unnecessary barriers to staff movement. The establishment of Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS) should be a positive development. We believe that rigorous regulation of services, such as child protection must be undertaken by professionals who are able to ensure that such services meet the standards outlined by the Scottish Government. UNISON would urge that it should incorporate a duty for all employers, in the public, private and voluntary sectors to be bound by the Scottish Social Services Council Code of Practice.

# SOCIAL WORK

UNISON Scotland believes that excellently provided, publicly funded social care services are an essential part of a caring and compassionate society. To deliver these services requires supporting the people who deliver them, as they are essential to the quality of service provided. The Scottish Government needs to ensure that social work staff are trained, supported and resourced to undertake the often difficult and complex tasks required by service users.

Demand has increased across the whole range of social work services, from homecare to child protection, criminal justice to services for people with learning disabilities. This has not been matched by an increase in available resources - indeed many areas are facing cuts. This means that staff are constantly overstretched, leading to stress and burnout, which can result in deteriorations in the quality of service.

UNISON Scotland has produced *Helping People Change Their Lives* - a manifesto for improving the way social workers carry out their duties in Scotland. Two negotiation guides support the manifesto: *Supervision and Workload Management* and *Keeping Safe in the Workplace*.

Workload management is key to ensuring that tasks allocated to staff are manageable and allow sufficient time for them to use their skills appropriately and meet the demands that are placed upon them. We believe that steps should be taken by all employers to introduce effective workload management systems. Few employers have effective systems in place to ensure that what staff are asked to undertake is manageable and allows for sufficient time for staff to apply their skills appropriately. In addition, time-based schemes have to take into account the individuality of the worker - a newly qualified worker would take longer over most tasks than experienced workers.

Guidelines should be produced for local authorities on appropriate levels of staffing to meet the needs of communities that should be monitored by the inspection process. The guidelines should take account of safety and assessment requirements as well as the demographics and poverty indices. These guidelines must be based on need not budgets.

Other issues covered in our manifesto include:

- Accountability
- Reporting Problems
- Career and Reward Structure
- Accessibility
- Communities

## RESOURCES

Increased spending across Scotland in recent years has not managed to keep pace with demands of governments and communities. Cuts in budgets are leading to real fears about service cuts in the near future at a time when increasing levels of unemployment, homelessness and poverty will place even greater demands on the services needed. Now, more than ever, social work needs additional resources to meet these challenges.

Social work staff are expected to perform miracles by helping people to change their lives. However, with increasing demands upon them, it becomes difficult to maintain the high standards they set themselves. The above issues all need to be addressed in the near future to support social work staff to maintain and surpass these standards.



Cartoon by Boyle: Public works!

## FAIR TREATMENT

Public services can only be as good as the workers who deliver them. Fair treatment and remuneration including pensions are essential to motivating any workforce - from bankers to bin collectors. This is never more the case than at times such as this when it is expected that workers will engage in developing new ways of working and delivering services.

We expect our members to be respected and rewarded with fair pay and conditions. This should, at the very minimum, mean paying a living wage of at least £7.20 per hour to every person who works delivering public services.

UNISON Scotland is also concerned that below inflation pay will widen the gender pay gap. Equal pay has been challenging for local government

in recent years. Despite compensation payments running to several hundred million pounds, low paid public service workers are still pursuing tens of thousands of equality claims.

The Scottish Parliament's Local Government Committee has also expressed its dismay at the slow and costly progress towards pay equality. UNISON Scotland would like to see more action taken to address this issue, including the use of capitalisation where appropriate.

Local authorities should build equality duties and the Living Wage into their employment practices and their procurement policies.

# CONCLUSION

This election brings a much needed focus on the issues facing local government. UNISON aims to lead a high quality debate on the future direction of councils and the essential services they deliver. Through the principles of Democracy, Fairness, Excellence, Partnership and Investment local government can support our communities through this crisis - and lead the way out of the crisis through investment in those communities.

These are tough times for local government. Budgets are being cut. Services are being cut and charges raised for a range of essential services. Workers also face a pay freeze at a time of rising costs. Job numbers are lower than they were in 1999 when power was devolved to the Scottish Parliament. People are suffering as cuts impact on their services.

UNISON fully supports the improvement of local services. What we want is *real* improvement - not the failed dogma of privatisation and outsourcing. Public Private Partnerships, failed shared services projects and outsourcing ventures have already wasted many millions of pounds. Centrally driven initiatives cannot provide the answers to the complex needs of our diverse communities. People need to have a real say in how services are delivered in their communities. Only full involvement of users and staff in service design and delivery will guarantee that.

UNISON Scotland will be challenging all the candidates in the forthcoming elections on their commitment to public services - and asking them to support these principles and our manifesto for a better way.

**PUBLIC  
WORKS:**

The logo for UNISON Scotland features the word "UNISON" in a bold, purple, sans-serif font. Below it, the word "Scotland" is written in a smaller, purple, serif font. A green, stylized graphic element resembling a wave or a ribbon curves around the text.

UNISON  
Scotland

**PUBLIC  
WORKS:**

**Public Works is UNISON  
Scotland's campaign for  
public services**



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