

revitalise

A bulletin on UNISON Scotland's public services campaign
No 1 January 2007



Taking the Revitalise Campaign to the members

Welcome to the launch of a new bulletin that aims to take UNISON-Scotland's *Revitalise our Public Services* campaign into branches, giving you information, background research and suggestions for things that you can do to pursue the *Revitalise* principles at the grass-roots.

Democracy
Investment
Fairness
Partnership
Excellence

Mike Kirby, UNISON's Scottish Convenor, says



"Key to the success of such campaigning is involving your members in activity around areas of the campaign that affect them. Things like

Efficient Government Initiatives, Shared Services, and Privatisation are increasingly live issues in branches across the public services. This occasional bulletin hopes to flag up new developments, outline helpful stats and tactics, detail issues to raise with employers, and with prospective politicians – it is clear that public services will be a key battleground in the forthcoming Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections."

What can branches do?

There are many initiatives that branches can take to progress the campaign, and we want to help you to do this effectively. One thing to keep in mind is to concentrate on campaign work that is likely to show results and can involve members. To do this it is best to pick a

relevant issue that directly affects members locally – especially if it has a public impact as well. Then you have a) a much better chance of getting members to participate – sending letters and lobbying councilors etc. and b) hopefully something you can easily monitor for effectiveness.

Remember, that an important trigger in getting sympathetic press coverage for your campaign, is the use of case studies – individual members who are affected by changes and who are prepared to comment/be photographed etc. Make sure they know the union's line on the issue, and give them appropriate training – this bulletin and the P&I team can help with these. Also good, are case studies of successful public service initiatives – members who have won awards etc. Remember also to let us know about any case studies and about relevant developments in your branch - k.sillars@unison.co.uk, and c.bartter@unison.co.uk

Materials planned

Other materials we plan – and this is not an exclusive list – will be, a Local Government Manifesto, a briefing for branches attending the Public services lobby of Westminster on the 23 Jan, and a list of suggested questions for branches (and members) to ask local candidates. Posters and leaflets on the themes of the campaign are also planned. Keep an eye on the website and this bulletin will also help to keep members informed.

... as others see us

The debate around the future of public services in Scotland is generating interest across the UK. *The Guardian* produced a pull-out on Scottish public service reform in November. It contains an overview of the challenges facing Scotland and contrasts Scotland's approach to that of the rest of the UK. The section on health says that a report comparing the UK four health care systems post devolution found that Scotland's is the most sustainable because it focuses on partnership working.

Gurus and Theories

The Government Improvement Service website is now operational. It provides information on public sector changes under the Efficient Government Initiative and links to publications from various management gurus and organisations working in the public and private sector across the world. Current articles include "Learn to let go" from *McKinsey Quarterly* and "How to use culture as a catalyst for change" from *People Management*. There is a regular news letter, visit <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/> to subscribe.

Computer project debacle

A report into a project to save money by computerising the Executive's personnel operation has concluded that it has been a debacle from the start. The project has been halted and may have to be scrapped even though half its £8.5 million budget has already been spent. Much of the detail of the report is not available, being 'commercially confidential'. The project is being looked at to see if anything can be salvaged.



Efficient Government—Targets achieved in first year?

An recent Executive report claims that efficient government initiatives are on target to make the savings aimed at in the first year.

The Efficient Government Outturn Report 2005/06, compares savings achieved in 2005/06 with those planned by Executive Departments. The five areas or “efficiency work streams” where savings were proposed are: Absence Management, Asset Management, Shared Services, Streamlining Bureaucracy and Procurement. (For background on the Efficient Government Review see [Briefings 86, 108, & 135.](#))

Absence Management: Data has been collected across the public sector and is now being analysed. A Managing Absence steering group has been established to provide guidance.

Asset Management: Initial work has taken place and there will be moves to promote a more strategic approach to managing assets. The Improvement Service is to work with local authorities to improve work.

Shared services: The Shared Services subgroup has produced a consultation paper on shared services. See UNISON’s response (<http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/response/sharedsers.html>)

Outline of savings by portfolio

Portfolio	Sample projects	Target savings 2005/06	Confirmed saving 2005/6
Communities	£25m by Councils reviewing housing support services	£0	£25.1m
Education and Young People	£21m of teachers time released from administrative tasks by employing classroom assistants	£0	£12.2m
Enterprise and Lifelong Learning	£9.6m through shared services and streamlined processes at Scottish Enterprise	£5m	£25.6m
Finance & Public Sector Reform	£168.3m from projects across all 32 councils	£89m	£130.6
Health and Community Care	£62m by improved prescribing and discounts on branded drugs. Each NHS board to reduce sickness absence to 4%, saving £54.8m.	£166m	£176.8m
Procurement	£150m by joint purchasing, general improvement and IT	£50m	£24.5m

Streamlining Bureaucracy: The Executive has reviewed its statistical and administrative links with other public services. There has also been a review of the many different plans that public sector organisations have to submit to the Executive with a view to streamlining these processes.

Procurement: various groups e.g. the Public Procurement Reference Board, are now in place to improve procurement in Scotland and training and development opportunities are now in place.

Savings on Target

The target was cash savings of £405m in the first year. Confirmed savings in cash and time are £441.8million. £386.5 in cash sav-

ings have been confirmed. Water industry savings are not yet confirmed. Their target was £76m. There has been no analysis of the impact of savings on service delivery.

The report also states that measuring and validating efficiency gains “has been and will continue to prove a difficult challenge”. They do though recognise that improving information management for this purpose must not divert resources away from delivering improved services.

The Efficient Government Outturn Report 2005/06 is available from the Executive website <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/09/efficientgovernment>.

Audit Scotland concern re ‘cost-only’ measurements

A new report by Audit Scotland, welcomes the commitment of the public sector in Scotland to the Efficient Government Initiative, but its concerns about how savings are to be measured adds weight to UNISON’s *Revitalise* campaign.

Serious concerns are raised about the measurement of savings and the possible impact on services if these

are not done properly. The report stresses the need to establish baseline figures to compare against and to develop measures of quantity and quality. It highlights the very real risk that costs will be reduced by providing poorer services.

UNISON has always said that traditional methods of measuring performance which concentrate on cost

are not suitable for public services. “Efficiency and effectiveness in the public services are about more than price” We think targets should be based on inputs, outputs and outcomes plus any process measures.

Any measure introduced as a result of this report must not lead to the creation of a larger and burdensome scrutiny industry with savings eaten up by the costs of measuring.

Local Government settlements worth above £250m more

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The Scottish Executive has responded to widespread concerns expressed by UNISON, local authorities and others over the 2007-08 financial settlement for councils. The Finance Minister has announced a package of measures worth more than £250 million of additional benefits for Scottish local authorities in 2007-08 including new funding of £201 million (£140 million revenue and £61 million capital).

Real Increase

This is a real term increase in local authority spending. In addition there are ring-fenced funds provided from other Scottish Executive budgets. However, there are also growing demands on local government spending, at least partly, due to the demands placed on local authorities from the Scottish Executive. In addition efficient government savings were top sliced from local government. The cumulative impact was described in the Parliament's Finance Committee report on last year's budget settlement:

"The Minister has acknowledged that new funding pressures are impacting on local authorities and promised to revisit this next year. That is a positive commitment. However, the Committee remains very concerned that to meet the 2.5% council tax target, the Executive's target for spending leaves a shortfall which the Committee calculates as £84.9m over and above the £58.5m efficiency savings target." (5th Report, 2005: Stage 2 of the 2006-07 Budget Process)

Total revenue funding provided by the Executive through the core settlement to local authorities in 2007-08 will rise to £8.7 billion - an increase of £393 million or 4.7 per cent over 2006-07, over what was previously announced. The extra funding of £61 million for capital

means the total support for capital provided by the Executive to local authorities will be £906 million next year. Together with various other measures, this means that local government will now benefit in 2007-08 from a package of measures worth more than £250 m. Details of the amounts allocated to each individual authority were in the P&I Briefing no 149 and are on the website at

<http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/lgfund20072008.html>.

Councils were already due to receive a further £954 m of revenue grants. In total, therefore, support from the Executive, including both revenue and capital will rise to £10.5 bn in 2007-08. In return for this increase councils have given assurances to increase council tax collection rates, exert a downward pressure on council tax levels and increase their target of efficiency savings by at least £61 m.



Douglas Alexander MP addresses the joint UNISON/Oxfam fringe on Public Services and Global Poverty at Oban's Scottish Labour Conference.

Elected health boards a step closer

The Scottish Parliament's Health Committee's has agreed to support Bill Butler's Private Members' Bill to provide for direct election of members of health boards.

The bill was extensively backed by UNISON and we are much quoted in the report. Dave Watson welcomed this step towards democracy. He said: "UNISON Scotland welcomes the Health Committee's decision to back the Bill. An injection of democracy into health boards will help change the culture of patient involvement, giving the public a real say in developing services."

Recent high profile campaigns about hospital closures and treatment availability demonstrates clearly that the public want to be part of the process of planning health care in their areas.

Scottish Health Board expenditure was almost £7 billion in 2004/5; Local democratic accountability is vital for expenditure of this level..

The proposed Bill will support recent changes like Freedom of Information and the new requirement of to involve service users. The Bill can play a vital role in changing the culture of health boards to one of openness and consultation.

Revitalising the political process

UNISON's vision for Scottish public services, *Revitalise*, has been at the heart of UNISON's activities at party conferences this autumn. We had stalls at all conferences and either hosted or participated in fringe meetings at the Labour, Scottish National and Green Party conferences to highlight our agenda.

Along with other affiliated trade unions though the STULP committee UNISON was also heavily involved

in work on Labour's policy document, getting significant commitments on issues like the use of charitable trusts, the two-tier workforce and others.

The Revitalise Manifesto (www.unison-scotland.org.uk/revitalise) will also form the main policy thrust of our input into the Conservative and the Scottish Liberal Democrat Conferences in February.

Sharing the workload?

Shared services are quickly becoming the 'in' tactic on the efficient government agenda. Employers are moving quickly with a range of schemes. Moray Council has been meeting with up to eight others to discuss shared financial services. Glasgow and Edinburgh have pathfinder status; they are trying to make savings by standardising best practice across organisations, looking at increased sharing of services. Stirling and Clackmannan continue their wide-ranging look at services they can share. Orkney and Shetland are exploring many partner agencies including the NHS in attempts to improve efficiency.

In the NHS, Employee Directors are being asked by UNISON not to sign off approval of the FBC in support of the National Shared Services proposals. The current proposals suggest a Scotland-wide finance and payroll service centralising these in a few 'Sheds'. Consultation on these proposals closes on 26 Jan, but UNISON is already clear that these proposals are not evidenced based or evaluated and have significant and unnecessary job losses and upheaval for insignificant savings.

Even if there are no detailed proposals yet locally it is likely there will be soon. Branches need to plan now for detailed negotiation with employers and for campaigns. Key members of your branch must be up to date on shared services in general and local plans on potential reorganisations of departments or sharing services with external partners. Check UNISON's [Shared Services briefing](#) for more.

CitiStat—a new way of reviewing performance?

Following the many issues in the public sector around information collection and analysis the CitiStat model has been piloted in four areas in Scotland's public sector: City of Edinburgh; Aberdeen City Council; NHS Tayside and NHS Ayrshire and Arran.

CitiStat is a database system which allows its users to regularly review every aspect of the organisation's performance. The system was introduced in the city of Baltimore in 2000 and is credited with saving over \$13 million by cutting costs, increasing revenue, and reducing absenteeism.

The performance of each city department is now checked daily and addressed bi-weekly rather than annually. Scottish Executive research indicates that CitiStat has "potential value" for Scotland. Introducing this will need decisions about of "what we measure?" and "why?" CitiStat focuses on actionable data rather than the data which is used for much current monitoring. The report is available on <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/07/21102410/0>

Sorry, seems to be the hardest word

Scottish Public Service Ombudsman's Office has issued guidance to public services on how to say sorry. Public bodies frequently fail to say sorry either through fear of inviting litigation through an admission of wrongdoing or through insensitive responses.

The director of the Ombudsman's office Richard Smith said "The threat of litigation is not as high as many feel. Most people's motivation is not financial. They just need an acceptance that something went wrong". The office is pressing the Executive for legislation to allow public bodies to apologise without admitting liability.

If you are facing any particular issues from issues highlighted in the bulletin, or if you have good examples of public services succeeding by following the Revitalise principles, please contact Kay Sillars in the P&I team. 0870 7777 006. k.sillars@unison.co.uk

Round the services

Glasgow

Glasgow City Council is investigating new ways of delivering cultural and leisure services. A key idea being floated is the development of Social Enterprises. This would open up these services for investment from Trusts, Foundations and the private sector. A business plan is currently under development. (See [Briefing no 148.](#)) This follows the decision to establish a limited liability partnership to replace its Direct Labour Organisation. Staff and equipment will transfer to the new businesses City Building (Glasgow) LLP and City building (Contracts) LLP over a four month period. The LLPs are now in a position to bid for new contracts both with the Council, GHA and the private sector.

Moray

According to Moray's Chief Executive the costs of single status and the rising demand for community care mean Moray council needs to make savings of £4million this year and £1.5 million next. As well as looking to share services, they are reviewing service delivery in the following areas: area offices; catering; cleaning; preschool administration services, out of area placements and car parks. Staff are also being asked to contribute ideas for savings via the Intranet.

Stirling

Stirling Council has launched a new service allowing people to contact the council by text to a single number. The texts will be managed by the Council's contact centre. The Council will also text responses and use text messages to contact citizens. It is hoped this will allow the Council to respond better to citizen's needs. More indications on Stirling and Clackmannanshire's talks on Shared Services has Stirling Council leader Corrie McChord stating that "job losses will undoubtedly play a role" in an interview in *Holyrood*. (See [Briefing no 147](#))