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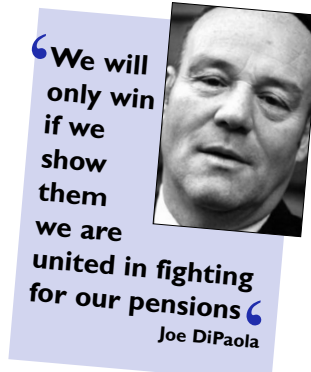
Scotland in UNISON

Mar 2006
No. 59

Copy sections of this bulletin or the online version to use in local branch or workplace newsletters

Local Government Pension Scheme under attack

Vote yes to fight for pensions



Vote YES in the ballot
The ballot opened on 20 February and closes on 10 March.
A UNISON Direct Ballot Helpline will open on 25/26 February (0845 355 0845).

NHS Scotland Getting Equal
See Page 3 for your Equal Pay Form

by John Stevenson
SIU editor

As we go to print, ballot papers are going out from UNISON and other trade unions to public service workers across Scotland calling for action to defeat plans to cut their pension rights.

The fight is on against plans to delete the 'Rule of 85' which allows pension members to retire on full pension at 60, or apply for this if over 50, if their age and years of service add up to 85 or more. The scheme covers local government, police staff and many other services.

The Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform, Tom McCabe, has angered members by following the Westminster government in amending the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) regulations, arguing he has legal advice that the Rule of 85 would contravene the European age discrimination directive.

"This goes against the legal advice taken by UNISON and CoSLA on the directive and the yet to be published potential legislation", said Joe Di Paola, UNISON's Scottish Organiser (Bargaining).

It also conflicts with the public statements of the EU's spokeswoman on employment, social affairs and equal opportunities, Katherina Von Schnurbein.

Tom McCabe has seen the

Within one day of the website form to email MSPs about pensions went online, over 100 emails were sent by members. Keep up the pressure at www.unison-scotland.org.uk/pensions

UNISON and CoSLA legal advice and Joe challenged him on the government's advice.

"If the government is so sure of its advice that they are prepared to reject two contrary opinions, why are they frightened to

show it to us?"

Joe urged everyone to work hard for a YES vote in the ballot.

"We must keep the pressure up. There is still time for the government to change its mind but we will only win if we show them

we are united in fighting for our pensions", he said.

UNISON General Secretary, Dave Prentis, said, "This dispute is the biggest issue UNISON has faced for decades. It affects the rights of one million of our members who have paid 6% of their salaries into their pension scheme for decades to save for their retirement and are now being told that the deal is off."

Jane Carolan, one of Scotland's
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UNISON slams Glasgow cuts



Glasgow City Branch has slammed council cuts of £31 million after the council froze its council tax.

"Cuts in service provision to the people of Glasgow is now becoming an established annual event. Yet again some of the

most vulnerable members in our communities will be hit hardest.

"There are serious issues for the health and welfare of the old and the young in these proposed changes", said branch secretary David O'Conner.

"A 15% cut in residential care places for children at risk and the scrapping of the Meals on Wheels service will have particularly severe impact.

"On a different level closing the cities museums every Monday if
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Equal pay: Fight for settlements but tribunals if needed

National UNISON officer Heather Wakefield has faced a lively question and answer session of Scottish Local Government branches on equal pay claims.

Branch activists' questions reflected the work they are having to put in to meet, as Heather conceded, "the biggest demand branches will ever face".

Many councils have started to make compromise offers of back pay to affected members in lower paid jobs mainly done by women.

But in many cases these offers are far below what may be achieved in a tribunal claim, although people have to measure that against the long and difficult

process of making a claim with no guaranteed outcome.

And in many cases these offers are being made before a proper equality-proof job evaluation scheme is in place giving the real comparators.

"Job evaluation and a proper grading structure that delivers equal pay for the future" was essential to the whole process, Heather stressed. "If we get that right, we will not have these problems again".

Joe DiPaolo, Scottish Organiser (Bargaining) said, "Branches are in discussions with employers up and down the country. Regional Officers are there to support branches.

UNISON Scotland is currently looking at re-focusing its efforts to support branches and members in the equal pay fight.

"If necessary and as appropriate we will litigate on behalf of members. They do not need to go to external no win no fee lawyers.

"We are constantly updating our legal advice and will be sending guidance out to branches very soon.

"In the meantime, if approached by employers, please contact your Regional Officer.

"UNISON Scotland will be looking at all the equal pay discussions and negotiations centrally with a view to providing advice and support."

Glasgow cuts protest

From page 1

sends out all the wrong signals if Glasgow is serious in trying to establish the city as a quality destination for international visitors."

The branch estimates that over 300 jobs will be lost and has said that there are serious health and welfare issues for old and young alike in proposals which include

- 15% cut in residential care places for children at risk.
- Meals on Wheels service being replaced with a once a week delivery of frozen meals.
- Residential care places for the elderly will cut with the

closure of yet another home.

- Council will no longer deal with insect infestation after cut in Pest Control Services.
 - The number of Welfare Rights Advisers and Community Workers will be cut.
 - Out of School Care service for 5 to 12 year olds will be transferred to the voluntary sector putting long term provision under threat.
 - Opening hours in community libraries and leisure facilities will be cut.
 - City museums will close every Monday.
- www.glasgowcityunison.org.uk

Dawn raids condemned

UNISON Scotland is to mount a campaign for an end to the forcible removal of asylum seeker families from Scotland and the practice of dawn raids with the traumatic impact this

Convention so that it does not apply in immigration and asylum situations, thus further discriminating against already vulnerable children.

Kate recognised that most asylum seekers are in Glasgow and other areas may not see this campaign as so relevant to them.

However she stressed it was an issue for the whole country.

"It is about respect for others ... and the kind of society we want to have here in Scotland"

Kate Ramsden



has, not only on the families being removed, but also on other refugee children who must live daily with the real fear that it could happen to them.

The union will also campaign for an amnesty and donate £500 to Positive Action in Housing, asking branches to donate too, as well as urging members to take the issue up with their MSPs and MPs.

"Dawn or anytime raids are inhumane and degrading. They breach the human rights of asylum seekers and there is no doubt that they also breach the rights of the children under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child", Aberdeenshire's Kate Ramsden told delegates. She was shocked that the UK Government had placed a reservation on the

"The way asylum seekers are treated in this country is a wider issue which should concern us all.

"It is about respect for others and citizenship and is about the kind of society we want to have here in Scotland and the UK", she said.

"At a time when Scotland, in particular, is crying out for people to come and settle and work in this country, it is completely inconsistent to be deporting families who have lived here for years and are well established in their communities", added Kate.

On the amnesty issue, Kate reminded delegates there was when in 2003 the Home Secretary granted an amnesty to 15,000 asylum seeker families.

Finding ways to protect asylum seekers' children

by Kate Ramsden
Social Work Issues Group

UNISON Scotland has mounted a challenge to the 'inhumane' treatment of failed asylum seekers' children.

In January, a delegation led by Matt Smith, UNISON Scottish Secretary, met with senior civil servants from the Scottish Executive to discuss the First Minister's proposals for improving the treatment of failed asylum seeker families in Scotland.

The union along with many other individuals and organisations, has condemned the treatment of failed asylum seekers and particularly the practice of removal by dawn raids.

In response, Jack McConnell has stated that where a family with children under 16 is to be deported, best practice should be established that involves education and social services, in advance of any action being taken by the immigration authorities, to ensure that the rights of children and the concerns of their friends and teachers are taken into account.

The Scottish Executive is in discussion with the Home Office about this proposal.

Following a question at

December's Scottish Council, UNISON Scotland requested the meeting to clarify the implications of this for our members. Social work issues group members, Stephen Smellie, Chair, John Stevenson and Kate Ramsden attended from UNISON.

"We were very clear from the outset that UNISON members can have no role in the actual deportation process and will not be involved in uplifting children and taking them to a removal centre," said Stephen Smellie.

"We made it clear that we will not be a party to putting a human face on an inhumane practice."

"However, nor will we collude with the apparent view of the home office that asylum seeker children have no rights.

Influence

"UNISON members should have a role in promoting the rights, welfare and protection of the children of asylum seekers whilst they are living in this country, especially if this could, in some circumstances, have an influence on a decision to remove," he added.

The UNISON representatives described the meeting as helpful, though it was clear that the talks between the Scottish Executive

and the Home Office are at an early stage.

"We were left with the impression that the Scottish Executive is looking for a positive way forward and that they listened to what UNISON had to say," said John Stevenson.

"However, as immigration is a reserved matter we need to find ways to try and influence the Home Office to look meaningfully at a protocol which will ensure that the rights and welfare of the children of failed asylum seekers is taken into account when decisions to deport are being considered."

Links

UNISON Scotland, through the Social Work Issues Group, now plans to link in with colleagues in England and Wales and with a range of interested organisations in Scotland, including the STUC, the Scottish Children's Commissioner, BASW and immigration and asylum law centres.

A briefing paper on this issue has been drawn up by members of the Social Work Issues Group and will also be available on the UNISON Scotland website for comment - see www.unison-scotland.org.uk and click on social work.

UNISON backing members in Courts Unification programme

Scotland's district courts are to become part of the Scottish Court Service in a phased unification programme starting in Lothian and Borders.

UNISON is the recognised union and the only union which will negotiate on behalf of staff. Courts in Lothian and Borders Sheriffdom will be the first in the process, starting in 2007-08, with Grampian Highland & Islands second. Further rollout details

have not yet been announced.

A series of meetings has been held with the Scottish Court Service Court Unification team over the transfer of members working in district courts from local authority employers to the SCS.

There have also been two delegate meetings where members have been able to raise their concerns and receive updates on discussions with SCS.

At the January 6 delegate

meeting, Scottish Organiser Joe Di Paola reported that the following principles have been proposed by UNISON and are being considered by SCS:

- no transfer be compulsory;
- no compulsory redundancies arising from the unification exercise;
- generally 50% of work content on court work and over is the benchmark for transfer to the new service;
- a mechanism for dealing with

individual cases, either based on circumstances or disputed work content

- the question of single status/job evaluation in local government be taken into account;
- issues around the local government and civil service pension schemes be explored and dealt with as far as possible;
- UNISON is properly represented on the Implementation Groups which would be set up

in each of the Sheriffdoms.

It is hoped there will be increased attendance at the next delegate meeting. Full details will be circulated to branches.

The SCS has put some brief information up on its website at www.scotcourts.gov.uk/district/index.asp The background is explained in UNISON's briefing on Summary Justice Reform, available at www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/smarterjustice.html

Scottish public sector spending boosts economy

Research challenges business assumptions

UNISON Scotland has launched a report that provides evidence that challenges the claim that public sector spending in some way 'crowds out' private investment.

This dogma has been widely promoted by the Scottish business sector and parroted by some elements in the media.

Matt Smith, UNISON's Scottish Secretary said "UNISON has long been clear that the public sector is an important driver of the Scottish economy, rather than the drain that the CBI and the Chair of Scottish Enterprise claim. Despite very public statements from them and their allies in the press no evidence has ever been advanced to back up their case.

"UNISON therefore commissioned independent research to investigate the evidence. It found that not only

the public sector is an important driver of the Scottish economy, rather than the drain that the CBI and the Chair of Scottish Enterprise claim

Matt Smith



was there little or no evidence to back the 'crowding-out' theory on the contrary the public sector had a key role to play in promoting many aspects of economic growth."

The research was carried out by Dr Andy Cumbers, and Kean Birch of the Centre for Public Policy for Regions (CPPR) a joint research initiative of Glasgow and Strathclyde Universities.

It points out that internationally there is no pattern of relationship between economic growth and the size of the public sector.

High performing economies

have both high levels of government expenditure (Sweden, Finland, Norway) and low levels (Korea, Ireland - although Ireland has similar levels to the UK if European funding is included). It also finds that public sector investment in research and development has been critical in delivering important economic growth in new areas - eg IT and telecommunications (Finland) and biotechnology (Scotland).

It also provides basic infrastructure that assists the private sector in developing.

Matt said "The public sector

provides roads, healthcare, education and training, a legal framework and much other infrastructure without which the private sector would be less efficient. It also spends money in the private sector both through procurement and via its workforce. Now - thanks to Dr Cumbers and Mr Birch we know that it directly resources private business.

"It is long past time that business and right - wing commentators stopped dogmatic and unevicenced attacks on the public sector, and moved the debate on to a more informed analysis of the interaction between public and private sectors in a successful economy."

The report - Adding Value, Public sector spending and Scotland's economic development - is available on the UNISONScotland website at www.unison-scotland.org.uk/addingvalue.html

Pensions - keep up the pressure

From page 1

Scotland's National Executive members said, "Our members have signed up to a pension scheme under one set of terms and conditions, they had planned their life around these and then changes were being brought in by the back door.

"Our members will not pay for employers who took contribution holidays to subsidise the poll tax.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber attacked the "luxury pensions" negotiated by senior executives who then "criticised lowly paid public sector workers for expecting long-standing pension commitments to be honoured."

Directors at Britain's 100 biggest companies had amassed pensions that would pay an average £167,000 a year compared with just £6,344 for an average worker, according to a TUC study.

In 80 per cent of cases, executives could retire with a full pension at 60.

"They should stop lecturing the rest of us on how we should get smaller pensions from a higher retirement age," Mr Barber told the *Guardian*.

Social Work report reflects staff concerns

UNISON has welcomed the Report of the 21st Century Social Work Review, saying that the concerns, frustrations and aspirations of many social work staff have been listened to and reflected in the report.

The union went on to urge the Executive and employ-

ing career pathways and competence.

"We are pleased that the review has accepted many of the points UNISON has made regarding the need for politicians, the media and indeed society, to change their attitude to social work staff, and accept that there is no magic wand that can solve every problem 100% of the time. Particularly when staff face huge workloads and increased demand with low resources.

"We will continue to work with the Scottish Executive, local authorities, the independent sector employers, users and carers to take forward Scotland's Social Work services. We will continue to call for the resources necessary to make sure that services continue to improve.

"Changing Lives" is a significant step to achieving Social Work Services that meet the needs of the people of Scotland. It will be required reading for all social work staff."



Stephen Smellie

ers to recognise the problems of blame culture, and lack of staffing and financial resources highlighted by the report.

Stephen Smellie, Chair of UNISONScotland's Social Work Issues Group said: "The recommendations of the Report will need to be considered in full but we particularly welcome the emphasis on the critical role of a highly skilled workforce and the need to ensure the best use of these skills.

"Our members working as Social Workers will welcome the proposals for a range of career options and a national recognition and reward framework, reflect-

Getting equal

If you have not already filled in a form given to you by a branch officer or in the last issue of *U* magazine, fill in the one below and return it to the Equal Pay Unit by 28 November 2005.

"By submitting your claim to the Equal Pay Unit you will get professional support and an initial assessment of your case and advice on the next steps. Agenda for Change offers us a brighter future - but we also hope that many members will get fair compensation for the loss they have suffered in the past."

by Glyn Hawker
Scottish Organiser (Health)

The Equal Pay Unit (EPU) set up by Thompsons on UNISON's behalf has now processed over 7000 enquiries from members.

Most of these have resulted in grievances being lodged with their employers by the EPU as a first stage to lodging Employment Tribunal claims.

As branches will recall, these cases are being lodged to promote negotiations for a collective agreement at the Staff Council for back pay.

It has become apparent that many members have not registered a request for advice from the EPU because they have not yet been assimilated to Agenda for Change terms and conditions. This is particularly the case in Scotland, where assimilation is just beginning. We now wish to invite such members to register

such an enquiry by completing the appropriate form below. It is available on the UNISON website.

Members are asked to return completed forms by no later than 31st March 2006 (form produced left).

The EPU can process such enquiries, even if members have not been assimilated, so there is no reason to delay.

The current position on the unions' claim for back pay at the Staff Council remains as before.

The employers and the Government departments are not prepared to negotiate until a number of preliminary issues and test cases have been considered and determined by Employment Tribunals.

We are currently working with the EPU to ensure that we have test cases lodged for all groups of members who may have a claim.

FULL NAME*	_____
MR/M/S/MRS*	_____
HOME ADDRESS*	_____ _____ _____
HOME TEL NO*	_____
MOBILE NO	_____
EMAIL	_____
UNION MEMBERSHIP NO	_____
NAME OF EMPLOYER*	_____
ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER*	_____ _____ _____
ADDRESS OF WORKPLACE*	_____ _____ _____
JOB TITLE*	_____
PAY GRADE (IF KNOWN)	_____
NATIONAL INSURANCE NO (REFER TO PAYS LIP)*	_____

All questions marked* must be answered in full otherwise the Unit will not be able to pursue your claim on your behalf. Once the form is completed it must be returned by you to the Equal Pay Unit, PO Box 434, Sheffield, south Yorkshire, S1 4YS

Reconvened Black Members AGM marks its success

UNISON Scottish black members elected their new working committee at the reconvened AGM on 4th February 2006, in Edinburgh.

Despite lower than normal attendance, there were more than enough black members who came to attend the AGM from far corners of Scotland, to complete the quorum.

UNISON black members elected the Scottish Black Members Committee 2006. Those elected are Hamid Rasheed (Chairperson), Reena Lal (Vice chairperson), Ismail Donmez (Secretary), Bernard Kanya (Communications Officer), Luma Hassan (Membership Officer), Ravi Nathan (Education Officer) David Olwa / David Ng Hop (Budget Officer).

Pramila Kaur and Hamid Rasheed were elected to be Scottish representatives on National Black Members Committee.

At the AGM the members raised many concerns about the way SBMC performed last year.

Afshan Fairley a black member from Glasgow said: "I am delighted at the out-

Scottish Black Members Chair HAMID RASHEED reports on the Black Members AGM



come of elections, and I am glad to be part of the process to elect a committee that understands what needs to be done and how to influence policies to ensure Equality".

"I trust the leadership of the new SBMC; there are more knowledgeable people on the committee this year, which provides an opportunity for us to benefit from their knowledge about Equality and on the working of the SBMC with in UNISON Scotland", she added.

Jalal Chaudhry a black member from Edinburgh said: "I know why I came to the AGM, and I have used my democratic right to elect a committee that can deliver. I am optimistic that the performance of the new committee will be matching Scottish black

members' expectations".

The AGM proceedings were delayed by half an hour of so, because for some reason or another many of those who wish to contest elections for almost every position never turned up at all.

This created a stir for a short time as there were not enough members to make the quorum.

However, *Scotland in* UNISON's call (article on importance to attend SBMC AGM in *SiU* 58), appeared to be well headed, and within no time enough members appeared to allow the AGM to go ahead.

17 members UNISON black members attended, whereas it requires 15 members to make a quorum.

Bernard Kanya offered a vote of thanks and thanked the previous committee on their efforts to do the job in most difficult circumstances.

He thanked branches for encouraging their black members to attend the AGM.

He thanked all the black members who travelled from far corners of Scotland all the way to Edinburgh, to ensure successful AGM.

Moray attacks misinformation

Moray Council UNISON has reacted angrily to claims by individuals trying to force the council to create a new talking shop, and weaken the influence of staff.

Two ex union officers have been trying to force through a 'consultation' machinery in conflict with the normal bargaining processes, using new 'Information and Consultation' regulations.

Irene Sinclair, UNISON joint branch secretary said, "It is understandable employees feel disaffected after the single status bombshell which hit them last June. The truth is, however, that under the very regulations these people are championing, the consultation the council used then is all they would need to do. It was the action by the staff and negotiation by the unions that got the threat withdrawn."

"These individuals are using legislation designed to help workers with no negotiating rights to undermine established procedures that are working well."

"The most effective way of having a real influence over your own conditions is to join the main union, and come to our meetings like our AGM on March 1st!"

UNISON Education & Training Course Programme 2006

MARCH

Bullying & Harassment
Glasgow - Residential
3, 4 and 5 March

Stewards Introduction
Edinburgh - Non-Residential
7, 8 and 9 March

Grievance & Disciplinary (1)
Glasgow - Residential
10, 11 and 12 March

Stewards Introduction
Inverness - Non-Residential
13, 14 and 15 March

Branch Education Officers
Forum Glasgow 15 March

Grievance & Disciplinary (2)
Glasgow - Non-Residential
21, 22 and 23 March

Stewards Introduction
Edinburgh - Residential
31 March, 1 and 2 April

APRIL

Health & Safety (2)
Glasgow - Residential
7, 8 and 9 April

Employment Law
11, 12 and 13 April
Edinburgh - Non-Residential

Grievance & Disciplinary (1)
Glasgow - Residential
14, 15 and 16 April

Stewards Introduction
Glasgow - Non-Residential
18, 19 and 20 April

Health & Safety (1)
Inverness - Non-Residential
24, 25 and 26 April

Media Handling
Glasgow - Residential
28, 29 and 30 April

Grievance & Disciplinary (1)
Edinburgh - Residential
28, 29 and 30 April

MAY

Introduction to Conference
Glasgow 3 May

Stress in the Workplace
Glasgow - Residential
5, 6 and 7 May

Assertiveness for Women
Troon - Residential
5, 6 and 7 May

Stewards Introduction
Glasgow - Non-Residential
9, 10 and 11 May

Branch Officers Training:
Publicity/Secretary/
Treasurer/Svc Conditions
Glasgow - Residential
12, 13 and 14 May

Grievance & Disciplinary (2)
Edinburgh - Non-Residential
16, 17 and 18 May

Branch Officers Training
Chair/Equality/Education/
Health & Safety
Glasgow - Residential
19, 20 and 21 May

Grievance & Disciplinary (1)
Inverness - Non-Residential
22, 23 and 24 May

Health & Safety (1)
Edinburgh - Residential
26, 27 and 28 May

Public Speaking
Glasgow - Residential
26, 27 and 28 May

Health & Safety (1)
Glasgow - Non-Residential
30, 31 May and 1 June

JUNE

Stewards Introduction
Glasgow - Residential
2, 3 and 4 June

Stewards Introduction
Edinburgh - Non-Residential
6, 7 and 8 June

Grievance & Disciplinary (1)
Edinburgh - Residential
9, 10 and 11 June

Lay Tutor (Stage 1)
Glasgow - Residential
12 - 16 June

Branch Education Officers
Forum Edinburgh 14 June

Grievance & Disciplinary (2)
Inverness - Non-Residential
19, 20 and 21 June

Bullying & Harassment
Glasgow - Residential
30 June, 1 and 2 July

JULY

Grievance & Disciplinary (2)
Glasgow - Non-Residential
4, 5 and 6 July

Grievance & Disciplinary (1)
Edinburgh - Non-Residential
5 and 6 July

Grievance & Disciplinary (1)
Glasgow - Residential
21, 22 and 23 July

SEPTEMBER

Stewards Introduction
Edinburgh - Residential
1, 2 and 3 September

Grievance & Disciplinary (1)
Edinburgh - Residential
8, 9 and 10 September

Stewards Introduction
Inverness - Non-Residential
11, 12 and 13 September

Black Members Training
Glasgow - Residential
Date to be confirmed

Health & Safety (1)
Edinburgh - Non-Residential
12, 13 and 14 September

Grievance & Disciplinary (2)
Edinburgh - Residential
15, 16 and 17 September

Bullying & Harassment
Glasgow - Residential
15, 16 and 17 September

Stewards Introduction
Glasgow - Non-Residential
19, 20 and 21 September

Branch Education Officers
Forum - Glasgow
20 September

Campaigning
Glasgow - Residential
29, 30 Sept and 1 October

OCTOBER

Stewards Introduction
Glasgow - Residential
6, 7 and 8 October

Health & Safety (2)
Edinburgh - Residential
6, 7 and 8 October

Stress in the Workplace
Edinburgh - Residential
13, 14 and 15 October

Stewards Introduction
Edinburgh - Non-Residential
17, 18 and 19 October

Employment Law
Edinburgh - Residential
17, 18 and 19 October

Grievance & Disciplinary (1)
Edinburgh - Non-Residential
25 and 26 October

NOVEMBER

Bullying & Harassment
Aberdeen - Residential
3, 4 and 5 November

Grievance & Disciplinary (2)
Glasgow - Non-Residential
7, 8 and 9 November

Public Speaking
Edinburgh - Residential
10, 11 and 12 November

Mag Editing/Website Design
Glasgow - Residential
10, 11 and 12 November

Grievance & Disciplinary (1)
Glasgow - Residential
24, 25 and 26 November

For further details and application form, see website www.unison-scotland.org.uk or main Training Programme.

Throughout the year, in addition to the published programme, there will be courses and workshops specific to various groups and branches. Information will be sent to branches separately.

Applications must come through your branch.

We want to hear your news

Won any deals or cases for members? Any 'people' stories we could use? *SiU* is your paper, we want to hear your stories.

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