



Conference 2014
All the main reports of Scotland's input to debates at UNISON's annual parliament.



Unite and fight for the pay we deserve

'Our members need a pay rise, not only for themselves but for the economy as a whole', Jane Carolan tells Conference p3



PUBLIC WORKS:

a million voices for public services

July 2014 No.108

Scotland in UNISON

scottish council activists bulletin Use these stories in your branch newsletter or circulate the pdf version to members

The cuts don't work

UNISON warns of a major assault on public services as 60 per cent of cuts are still to come

UNISON Scotland has launched a report - **The Cuts Don't Work: The impact of 'austerity' cuts on Scotland's public services - showing what's really happening to public services across the country.**

The report highlights that Scotland's budget is being slashed by more than £6 billion in real terms. Around 50,000 public sector jobs have already gone with a further 60,000 expected jobs expected to go over the next five years.

'I earn under £10K - I have to choose between heating and eating. I deliver vital services to elderly people - my service users would agree I'm Worth It!'
Home carer

And local authorities have little choice but to put up charges for services like school meals, burials and cremations, day care and home care rates as they attempt to balance the books as a result of the ongoing council tax freeze.

'We often have to work through breaks, or work late, just to deliver the right level of care.'
Community midwife

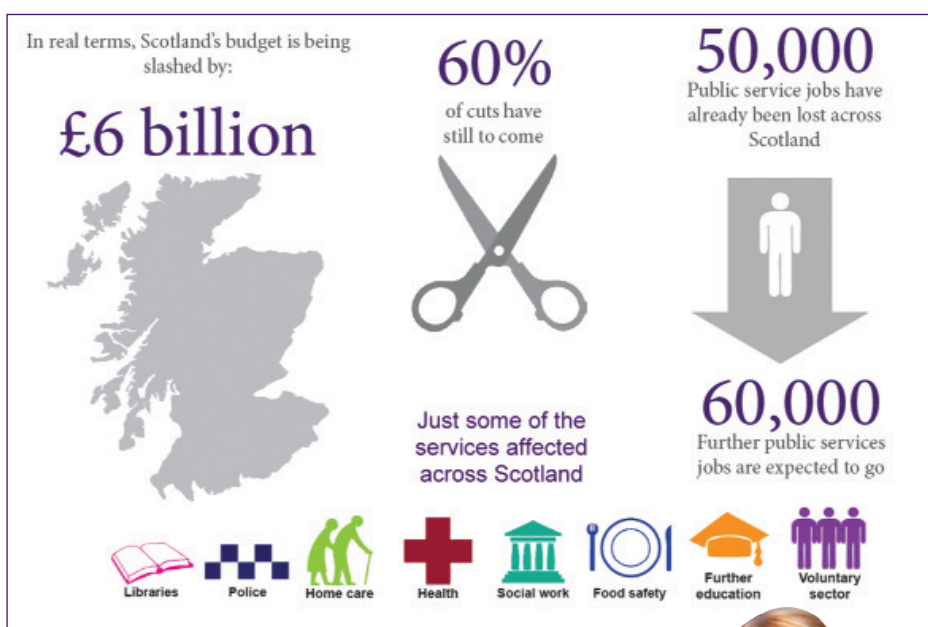
While the cuts affect everyone in Scotland, it is the most vulnerable who are hardest hit, as services are cut back, jobs go, pay is cut and living standards fall.

Lilian Macer, UNISON's Scottish Convener, said: "It's a major assault on services everybody relies on.

"Some problems may become visible suddenly and dramatically if something goes wrong, for example in food safety, or hospital cleaning where lives can be put at risk. Others may not be noticed in headline news, but are also deeply damaging to the people affected, their families and communities.

"It could be local libraries closing, or

'If I was given the time and energy to apply to the families that I work with I could change their lives forever, but currently we stick plasters on wounds that need stitches.'
Social worker



'We can afford public services. Cuts are neither necessary nor inevitable'

Lilian Macer



the rushed - and very impersonal - 15 minute care visits your grandmother gets, or children whose lives could have been turned around with proper social work support and intervention. Then there is the isolation of people who relied on day care centres that have closed down."

The report also looks at how the cuts are piling on pressure to overworked, underpaid staff across Scotland bringing public services to breaking point.

Lilian continued: "This report shows the damage cuts do to local communities, local economies and the fabric of our society. They are the result of decisions and choices made at every level of Government; local, Scottish and UK.

"We can afford public services. Cuts are neither necessary nor inevitable and UNISON will continue to campaign for the properly funded and accountable public services our society needs."

UNISON celebrates victory for low paid care workers

UNISON has welcomed Capability Scotland's decision to introduce the Scottish Living Wage backdated to 1 April 2014.

UNISON Scotland's recent report 'Scotland: It's Time to Care' highlighted the issue of chronic low pay in the sector.

UNISON has been part of the Scottish Living Wage Campaign for many years and a key concern is care workers, particularly those working in the private and charitable sectors.

Capability Scotland's decision to pay the living wage will bring an immediate benefit to over 400 staff. It is a big improvement to the pay of a largely female workforce who provide vital care for disabled children and adults across Scotland.

Deborah Dyer, UNISON's regional organiser for the charity sector, said 'We

understand the Scottish Living Wage comes at a cost and we know that the external funding environment is challenging. But that does not excuse low pay.

"The Scottish Living Wage was introduced in the public sector and Capability Scotland has shown it is possible for charities to pay the living wage too. We urge others charities to follow their lead because it is simply the right thing to do."

Dave Watson, head of UNISON bargaining and campaigns, said: "all charities should look carefully at what they pay their care workers if they are serious about the quality and continuity of care. Provisions in the Procurement Reform Act, which UNISON campaigned for, means councils can now legally require contractors to pay the living wage,

but this also needs to be fully funded by the Scottish Government."

● Speaking in the ethical care debate at UNISON's national conference, Renfrewshire's Brenda Aitchison told delegates that her council was the first to sign up to UNISON's Ethical Care Charter, after home care members met the Labour leader of their council and gave him a "no holds barred" account of the invaluable work they do.

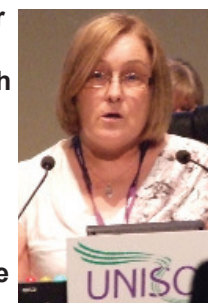
"As a result, a full commitment to training and the living wage was inserted into the contract process," said Brenda.



Brenda Aitchison

Privatisation warning on social care integration

Margo Cranmer from Lanarkshire Health warned UNISON conference that the commitment UNISON has won in Scotland of no privatisation in the NHS needs to be delivered for the integration agenda as well.



Margo Cranmer

Backing a wide-ranging motion pledging a campaign to defend our NHS, Margo paid tribute to the Scottish Health Committee for "their relentless campaigning that has led to all political parties saying there will be no privatisation of the NHS in Scotland."

But she warned of the 'clear and present danger' of privatisation since home care services in some local authorities have been privatised.

"We must remain vigilant as the voluntary and private sector will be sitting round the table contributing to decisions on services", said Margo.

Margo was moving an amendment to a campaigning motion underlining the need for an NHS based on its founding principle of free at the point of delivery. It pledged to fight privatisation, campaign for fair pay and, where possible, to cancel PFI contracts that one delegate said were: 'bleeding the health service dry'.

Ayrshire and Arran Health's Ewing Hope, speaking for the Health Service Group, spoke of the crisis staff are facing due to cuts: "We know the stresses staff are under, leaving work in tears from frustration", said Ewing.

Meat hygiene deregulation will bring tragic consequences

Deregulation of meat hygiene inspections will result in tragic consequences, UNISON has warned.

A recent freedom of information request revealed that since April 2012 meat inspectors and vets have prevented over a million instances of diseased animal carcasses from entering the food chain. This included:

659,000 instances of the Liver Fluke parasite, 427,000 instances of pneumonia in red meat carcasses, 100,000 instances of adult tape worm, 100,000 tumours in chickens, 1100 instances of parasitic lung worm in cattle.

Dave Watson, head of UNISON bargaining and campaigns, said: "This shows what a vital job meat inspectors do. We are calling on the Scottish Government to ensure that Food Standards Scotland is focussed on safety of consumers not food industry profits."

Be bold and give us a reason to vote Labour

Scotland NEC member Gordon McKay urged Labour to be bold and give members and their families a reason to vote Labour and 'wipe UKIP off the map'.



Gordon demolished the politics of UKIP and statements by Farage 'aimed simply at spreading fear, hate and division based on race and colour.'

But Gordon warned Conference that we must not label all UKIP voters as sharing those views: "In the last 80 years the trade union movement has defeated the British Union of Fascists, the National Front and the BNP. We did it not by condemning everyone who voted for them. We did it by working with communities and by exposing these groups for what they stood for and we will do the same with UKIP."

In a message to Ed Miliband, Gordon said you don't defeat UKIP by saying "Vote Labour, vote for Tory spending limits" or vote for more austerity. You defeat UKIP by "being bold" said Gordon. "Vote for Labour, vote for the NHS. Vote for public services. Vote for a fair society."

Branch funding

Conference failed to pass any motion on branch funding with the National Executive withdrawing a detailed interim position and the conference narrowing throwing out a leadership backed composite.

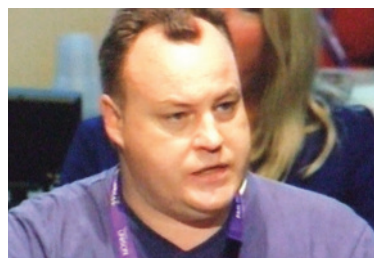
It was then all down to Scotland's motion. Scotland had not joined the composite because it undermined the principle of re-distributing the huge funds amassed by some branches to ensure the money was working for the union.

Scotland's Stephen Smellie explained that to Conference and Scotland agreed to remit its motion. That takes us back a step but keeps the consultation going.

TTIP - beat Thatcherism's ultimate triumph

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) agreement between the European Union and the USA has "catastrophic implications for public services, not only here in the UK but across Europe," Glasgow's Chris Stephens told delegates, as Conference backed a range of measures to campaign against the treaty's adoption.

"The TTIP represents Thatcherism's ultimate triumph... The treaty will give big business a greater



status than national governments," warned Chris, especially the US Government's insistence on an "investor state dispute settlement" which will enable companies to challenge the democratic decisions of sovereign states.

“We still have a chance to stop this irreversible power grab by corporations”
Chris Stephens

"We still have a chance to stop this "irreversible power grab by corporations."

Chris called on delegates to engage with War on Want's campaign to lobby MPs to oppose the treaty and to sign the petition to Vince Cable on the 38 degrees website.

Anger at nurse and midwife registration fees rise

UNISON has responded angrily to proposals by the Nursing Midwifery Council to further increase nurse and midwife registration fees by 20%.

Across the UK over 100,000 nurses and midwives have signed up to an online petition via the House of Commons website which should now secure a parliamentary debate on this latest inflation busting increase by the NMC.

Scottish health branches have developed a template letter which

'Use the template letter'

members are being encouraged to sign and send to their MP. Chair of the Nursing Sector Committee, Gordon McKay explained why we need to make it political: "Two years ago the NMC increased registration fees to one hundred pounds and received a multi million pound bail out by the UK government.

"Now they have come back and want to increase fees by a further 20%.

"Now that the online petition has reached

the 100,000 mark, we wanted to make sure that Scottish MP's were aware of the anger amongst Scotland nurses and midwives. The template letter is a great way to engage members, organise a response and create a political focus for the campaign."

UNISON branches have already secured commitments to meetings on the issue with a number of Scottish MPs and will be pressing the case for members during the summer recess.

Get the template letter on the website by clicking 'Healthcare'.

Challenging both sides on a fairer Scotland

UNISON Scotland's position on the independence referendum in Scotland was backed overwhelmingly by UNISON's national conference after speakers queued up to lend their support.

Lilian Macer, Scotland's Convener, told delegates that UNISON Scotland hasn't signed up to either campaign, "not because we care less than anyone else about what happens, but because we have an idea about the kind of Scotland we want to see.

"One where money spent on public services isn't seen as a cost but an investment. Where a workforce that cares, cures and educates is acknowledged as an achievement and valued within our society and not seen as a drain on valuable resources.

"We want to tackle inequalities, poor health and deprivation.... Our approach has been driven by the interests of our members and the services they deliver.

"This is a great opportunity for us in Scotland to raise the issues around creating a more socially just, equal society and people in Scotland and union members are seizing the opportunity to engage in a real political debate.

"As a union we are challenging both sides of the debate to demonstrate to us how they can deliver that fairer Scotland which values public services and the people who provide them.

"And it is right that the



Lilian Macer and Mike Kirby at the fringe meeting

people who live in Scotland determine their own destiny on 18th September this year."

At a packed fringe meeting, Scottish Secretary **Mike Kirby** praised how the debate was being conducted in the union: "It has been conducted with humour and in a spirit that should be a lesson to politicians."

Lilian pledged that

regardless of the outcome of the referendum, there will be common interests between union members in Scotland and throughout the UK.

"We will continue to seek to build the strongest possible trade union for the benefit of all UNISON members in these four nations."

This was echoed by **Jane Carolan**, speaking for the

NEC. She referred to the late Bob Crow, who, as general secretary of the RMT once observed of his union, "Whether you are a ticket inspector on the Virgin Intercity or a seafarer in Hong Kong, what matters is that you are in the union."

"We may face different governments, different policies, but our union principles remain the same," added Jane.

"On 18th September we each individually have a decision to take. We each have a responsibility to consider not just what is best for us but for future generations; for our children, our grandchildren and great grandchildren.

"We are each entitled to our opinion and to cast our vote accordingly. To do so, we need information, not propaganda."

Dundee's Arthur Nicoll and Edinburgh's Duncan Smith also spoke in support.

Disability leave policies can end discrimination

Conference backed action to end the use of potentially discriminatory attendance management policies and called on branches to negotiate disability leave using UNISON's model policy.

There are serious concerns that employers are using attendance management to get rid of disabled workers as a cost cutting exercise, often in contravention of the 2010 Equality Act.

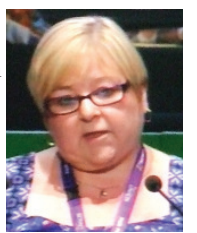
Dundee's Mags McGuire told delegates that her branch

has been challenging their employer to adopt a policy which is compliant with Equality law, so far without success.

"The policy is flawed, triggers are unreasonable for most, so it is far stricter for those with a disability," said Mags, adding that the policy allows for no discretion until the final stages, at the point of considering dismissal.

"Not only does this allow management to drag their heels when clearly ill-health retirement should be

considered, it also allows them to dismiss staff on the cheap which results in them meeting their cuts agenda."



Mags McGuire

She pledged that her branch will continue to challenge the employer "for as long as necessary" until they adopt a disability leave policy that is fair.

Lay tutors essential to challenge austerity

Conference backed the importance of lay tutors in 'challenging the myths perpetrated by the media and political elite.'

"Mandela said that education is the most important weapon that you can use to change the world", Stephen Smellie told the conference.

"Our most valuable resource is ourselves, our activists. We are experienced in representing members, negotiating, organising

and fighting injustice daily.

"We believe that lay tutors are essential in delivering a programme of activist development and political education that this union needs to address the challenges."

This was reinforced by Sandra-Dee Masson, speaking for the NEC welcoming the Scotland amendment and Scotland's involvement in piloting and implementing a new union wide approach to lay tutor training.

Unite and fight for the pay we deserve

Britain needs a pay rise and our members need a pay rise, not only for themselves but for the economy as a whole, Scottish NEC member Jane Carolan told the union's national conference in June.

The conference backed action, including co-ordinated strike action to win decent wages for our members.

Hot on the heels of Jane's rousing speech, local government members in England, Wales and Northern Ireland voted in a ballot to do just that with strike action starting on 10 July.

As we went to press a consultative ballot of local government members in Scotland was about to close on 7 July. Members are being asked to reject the 1% imposed by the employers outwith the bargaining structures.

Jane told delegates that as a science fiction fan, she knows what she is talking about when she says that some people live in a parallel universe: "Because some people are seeing the green shoots of recovery in our economy. The BBC tells us they are there, sections of the national media tell us they are there.

"But try as I might I just haven't spotted these little green shoots at all."

Getting poorer

With inflation increasing and our wages at a standstill, our living standards are falling away further, Jane told delegates.

"In the real world people are still getting poorer. Yes unemployment is falling, but 76% of the increase in employment has been in insecure, low paying, zero hours contracts or dubious self employment."

The number of workers earning less

'Unless our members have money in their pockets, there will be no recovery in the UK economy.' Jane Carolan



than a living wage has rocketed in recent years to more than five million out of only 38 million people of working age.

Jane condemned the scourge of low pay, the attacks on conditions and the deskilling of the workforce to keep the pay bill down. She warned that all this doesn't only affect us as workers. It affects our economy as a whole, with people having no money to spend, a fall in consumer demand which means the economy can't grow.

"The share of our economy that goes on wages is in decline, a long term trend that is now accelerating, very adequately demonstrated by the latest Sunday Times Rich List.

"The fat cats are putting on weight," slammed Jane.

Jane applauded the actions of UNISON

members who have taken action in defence of their pay: "We need to challenge the contempt shown to us by this Tory Government. We do more than a fair day's work - we deserve a fair day's pay.

"Unless our members have money in their pockets there will be no recovery in the UK economy. And the only way we will get that is by uniting and fighting for what we deserve."

Earlier Aberdeenshire's **Kate Ramsden** told the local government conference that the challenge is to build the confidence of all our members to say enough is enough.

"We must help them see that we need to act now - that we need to take collective action not just for ourselves but for our lowest paid members and for our service users."

More news from the conference on the website

Sadly we don't have space to cover all the Scotland reports from Conference but there is much more on the website, including:

Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland: Lilian Macer calls for UNISON to vigorously challenge Government failure to enforce Equality Impact Assessments

in Northern Ireland and across the UK.

Tory health and safety proposals are 'ideological nonsense':

Chris Stephens says our message must be clear on defending our hard won health and safety rights. We know workplaces with safety reps are statistically twice as safe.

Conference 2014

Stories by Kate Ramsden and John Stevenson. **For full stories see** www.unison-scotland.org.uk/conf14

UNISON's annual National Delegate Conference is the union's ruling body.

Every UNISON branch elects reps to attend annual conference and debate and vote on behalf of their local branch members. Scotland has about 200 delegates.

Recruit, organise and campaign!

Campaigning and organising were high on the agenda once again this year, as Conference agreed to campaign "visibly and vocally" against cuts to jobs and services, to attract new members and to keep the ones we already have.

Scotland's Stephen Smellie reminded delegates that there is a difference between recruiting and organising.

"Our aims must always be to recruit, organise and campaign," said Stephen, adding that we need to identify with our members, campaigning issues to organise around from the start.

"In Scotland almost a third of the members recruited in the first four months of this year are young members. This is excellent in recruitment terms but also in potential organising terms."

Stephen called on branches to survey these young members on why they joined and what they want us to campaign on.



Stephen Smellie

Supporting stewards working with stress

Conference backed a South Lanarkshire call for research into the impact on the well-being of stewards given the demands placed on them, with a view to putting in place support mechanisms.

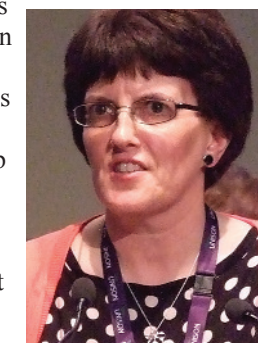
The branch's Margaret Gallacher told delegates that stress is the most common cause of long term absence and there is a proven link between lack of job security and poor mental health.

"We union stewards rarely meet members when they are having a good day. People don't phone to tell us

they're having a good day at work. They contact us when they're being disciplined, facing dismissal, redundancy or reorganisation, overworked, bullied, in debt, suffering from illness or trying to cope with psychological health issues."

Who supports the union rep in these circumstances? Margaret congratulated her branch for giving her access to suicide awareness training and she now knows where to refer people. She called on the union to "take positive steps to protect the mental health of our activists."

Margaret was backed by Brenda Aitchison from Renfrewshire and a moving account from a delegate of a member's suicide and her pledge to speak up for that person at UNISON's conference.



Margaret Gallacher

UNISON is the union for social workers

Local Government Conference delegates backed a call from City of Edinburgh Branch to mount an awareness and recruitment campaign on the issues for members raised by the contempt of court proceedings in Scotland.

They welcomed UNISON's actions in Scotland to protect and advise members and to press for legal changes.

Members in at least three local authorities had found themselves facing contempt proceedings as individuals while acting on behalf of their councils. Two members had been found guilty as individuals.

Edinburgh's John Stevenson told delegates that the problem stems from a legal system that thinks only grown ups have rights.

"Imagine you have a law in Scotland that says the child's welfare is paramount? Well we do. But imagine if that doesn't apply in contempt cases? No need to imagine. That happened too," he said.

To applause from the conference, he said: "But the end result is that we must not allow this to force defensive practice. We must not allow children to suffer for fear we will be done for contempt.

"UNISON did not just stand up with



John Stevenson



Kate Ramsden

legal help. It stood up to defend our members' professionalism. This is the union for social workers," said John.

This was echoed by Kate Ramsden from Aberdeenshire, whose members, including a council solicitor, also faced contempt proceedings, "for doing their job and doing it well."

She spoke of the impact on social work and other practitioners. "No longer can we feel confident that because we are acting as agents of the council and following procedures that we will be protected, however much we can justify it in welfare terms."

However, like John, her main concern was for the impact on children and their rights to have their welfare put first.

"We know that in practicing more cautiously and taking decisions more carefully, we are allowing bad situations to go on for longer and we are less willing to take risks that could put ourselves at jeopardy

even if that would be best for the child."

Kate added that this highlights the vulnerabilities of staff working in this field if they don't have a union behind them, "And not any union, one that understands the practice issues and will provide legal and other support - UNISON."

Fringe

Later Kate chaired Scotland's Social Work Issues Group's (SWIG) successful fringe meeting - "Challenges for Social Workers and the art of radical social work today."

Around 70 delegates, heard from Helga Pyle, National Officer for Social Care, and SWIG's John Stevenson and Colin Turbett.

Helga summarised the key findings from the UK UNISON report "Social Work Watch: inside a day in social work". This gives personal accounts of the tough day to day life of social work staff across the country on one day earlier this year.

"The impact of the cuts on children and adults is revealed in stark reality. 61% said their ability to make a difference day to day was affected by cuts to budgets and resources," said Helga.

Colin Turbett spoke about his book, "Doing Radical Social Work" which gives practical advice on how social work staff can work ethically in a time of austerity.

Glasgow councillors urged to end attack on workers' rights

UNISON has lambasted Glasgow City Council for taking action against more than 60 hard-working carers for participating in official, lawful industrial action earlier this year.

The union is calling on the city's councillors to step in and put an end to this attack on workers' rights.

Glasgow's care workers took part in industrial action as a last resort to defend a series of attacks on the services they

deliver to the most vulnerable people in the city. In the last year, Glasgow City Council has closed three of its seven day centres.

UNISON says the council's claims that members failed to follow an instruction to attend training is incompetent, as the conduct is protected industrial action.

Brian Smith, UNISON's City of Glasgow Branch Secretary, said: "Our members took the difficult decision to

strike as a last resort to defend the services that the most vulnerable people in Glasgow rely on.

"This action by Glasgow City Council breaches the limited protections afforded to workers taking part in industrial action in the UK and is a real kick in the teeth to hard-working carers.

"We're calling on Glasgow's councillors to step in and put an end this attack on workers' rights."

Venezuela visit

Alvaro Sanchez, Charge d'Affaires at the Venezuelan Embassy visited Scotland on 19 June and Glasgow City Branch arranged a lunchtime meeting for him to meet activists.

He told them that since the election of President Maduro in April 2013 the extreme right wing opposition had been stepping up their attacks.

They have clearly realised that they cannot win by democratic means - having lost 18 of the last 19 elections. Maduro has opened up dialogue with all parts of the community including business and opposition groups, encouraging peace and deterring revenge attacks on the opposition for atrocities.

The fear is that if the country is in uproar, the opposition could call on the US for support who had channelled \$100m illegally to opposition groups in the past 10 years, with \$5m alone in 2014 so far.

He was in Glasgow to meet with representatives of the second Scottish children's musical education programme in Govanhill, using the El Sistema system pioneered in Venezuela which has seen almost 200 orchestras formed, reaching some of the most disadvantaged children in the country. The first project in Scotland, the Big Noise from the Raploch in Stirling has won many plaudits, and the children involved were able to visit Venezuela last year.

Renfrewshire 'getting it right for members'



UNISON Renfrewshire has undergone a re-naming of their branch as part of their 2014 'Getting it Right for Members' initiative.

The branch agreed to change their name from UNISON Renfrewshire Local Authority Branch to UNISON Renfrewshire.

This is aimed at more adequately reflecting UNISON's involvement in the wider community while

maintaining the already strong connection with local government.

The official re-launch event took place in May in the Renfrewshire UNISON Office and offered the chance for employers to meet officers and activists in a friendly and informal setting to discover how UNISON involvement in the workplace can be positive and important for both employers and employees.

More news...

In this packed edition we haven't been able to cover everything. But remember, all the UNISON Scotland news is on the website and the blog. Here are some to look out for...

North East branches run first fair for benefits providers

The Family Fair to showcased the benefits of being a UNISON member. See aberdeenshireunison.com

Gradual drip of water privatisation reaches epic proportions

UNISON says new figures showing the extent of privatisation in Scottish Water should be a major wake-up call to the Scottish Government. See press release www.unison-scotland.org.uk

Take One Action Film Festival

UNISON Scotland is once again supporting the festival which will see a range of films on progressive issues of global concern shown in Glasgow and Edinburgh from 19 September to October 2014 www.takeoneaction.org.uk

UNISON Police Staff Scotland The First Year

David Malcolm reports in the next issue on the huge successes and challenges of the new Scotland-wide branch's first year.

Safeguards needed on medication in schools

Local government conference applauded action in Glasgow where pupil support assistants forced the council to withdraw proposals for all PSAs to administer medications to pupils with health needs and agreed a range of measures to campaign for enforceable national standards.

Carol Ball, Scottish member of the Service Group Executive said that the administration of medicines and medical procedures continues to cause a great deal of concern for many of our members in schools and other educational settings.



Sylvia Haughney

Glasgow's Sylvia Haughney told Conference that she was one of the PSAs who went on strike after Glasgow City council wanted to incorporate the administration of medicines into all school support staffs' contracts. The council called it low level but the range was from epilepsy to diabetes.

"Our members were appalled and outraged," said Sylvia "but management weren't willing to listen. They used bully boy tactics, issuing us all with letters threatening us with 45 days notice.

"We balloted; we took action - 17 weeks of action. We got a better deal for our members and won. Actions speak louder than words!" said Sylvia.

National Young Members' Conference

Over 120 young people travelled from across the UK for the day event which offered workshops on political and trade union education, campaign planning, getting active in UNISON and the role of the young members' officer.

There was also practical training when we took to the streets with the Scottish housing survey - getting over 400 completed by the public.

Our Scottish Young Members' Committee were delighted to win the best campaign prize for the second year running, as voted for by their peers, with stage two of the housing campaign impressing everyone.

There was of course some socialising and as the host region we ran a City Hunt on Friday night, teaming up delegates and sending them on a tour of the city centre to answer questions about Glasgow's history, and complete tasks. Well done to the East Midlands Region who conquered Glasgow and managed to complete the hunt!

We want to hear your news
SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories. John Stevenson (Editor) 0131 558 7488, webmanager@unison-edinburgh.org.uk

Colombia: Embrace Martha Diaz's spirit and her fight

Falkirk's Ruth Young urged Conference to embrace Colombian trade unionist Martha Diaz's "spirit and her fight" and called for continued support for Justice for Colombia.

Colombia is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a trade unionist and Martha has faced death threats, assassination attempts and the kidnapping of her daughter, yet has bravely continued her trade union work.

Ruth said: "I say to Martha Diaz,



Ruth Young

thank you. For genuinely inspiring me and for your courageous fight. A strong

woman like Martha should be an inspiration not just to me but to every member in this hall."

Conference responded with an overwhelming show of solidarity as it pledged to continue to support Justice for Colombia politically and economically and to encourage all branches to affiliate.

Delegates also called for the release of trade union activist, Huber Ballesteros and his colleagues, imprisoned for their trade union activities.

David MacLennan - Plays, Politics and Popularity

David MacLennan, the well-known theatre writer, director and producer, who died recently after a short battle with Motor Neurone Disease, had a long and supportive relationship with Scottish trade unions, and UNISON in particular.

I first came across David when he and his fellow 7:84 Theatre company co-founder, John McGrath reunited to produce (UNISON predecessor) Nalگو's street theatre production - On the pig's back - in 1983.

It was part of the union's first anti-cuts campaign and sparked a raft of similar union-supported productions dealing with the politics of the Thatcher years, including Bed Pan Alley, a

Wildcat (David's second company) production sponsored by NUPE.

Ultimately, similar initiatives also led to the establishment of MayFest in 1985. This arts festival was based on trade union MayDay celebrations. Typically David was in at the start of this too!

David had a flair for production and promotion of shows, but he was uncompromising politically. Soon after his last successful venture, a Play, a Pie and a Pint had established itself in a completely commercial arena, David addressed one of the first Morning Star cultural events in Scotland. He introduced himself as a 'convinced Marxist'!

His political commitment kept going

right till the end. His final project was to co-curate (with David Greig) National Theatre of Scotland's Yes, No, Don't Know Show, a series of five minute plays on the referendum, (the two co-curators were on different sides of the vote!)

Political, yes, but not didactic, David knew the need to entertain was part of the production. In his brother-in-law's phrase, the production had to offer an audience, 'A good night out', if it was to connect. Wildcat's did, and were hugely popular.

His Play, Pie and Pint format is now copied all over the world. It would be fitting if David's political ideas were similarly distributed!

Chris Bartter