

UNISON Matters

Aberdeenshire

August 2019

2019 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND NATIONAL DELEGATE CONFERENCES REPORT



Branch officers Inez, Kate, Kathleen and Morag all attended this year's conferences in Liverpool where the policies and campaigns for the future year, to improve our working lives, are debated and rules that need to be updated within UNISON are agreed. Our branch was as always well represented in these debates. On Tuesday to Friday we were joined by two colleagues from Cornerstone Mags Percy and Pat Lee who were taking part in this event for the first time.



Local Government Conference

Branch pensions' officer Morag Lawrence and branch equalities officer Kathleen Kennedy represented our branch at this conference. Kathleen said, "The conference covered a lot of important issues relevant to our branch

including climate change, which is something we highlighted at our AGM, with strong feelings that this is the time to act.

There was praise for Glasgow's equal pay strike, which will see thousands of women gain back-dated equal pay including life changing sums for some; the Birmingham home care members strike, which saw the council withdraw their plans for service changes; and many more, proving that we can beat the Tory anti-union legislation.

Kate Ramsden was there as a member of the NEC and Inez Kirk as member of Service Group Executive.

National Delegate Conference

The focus of conference and the matters debated were all about the kind of UK we want to see. Delegates slammed racism calling for justice for the Windrush generation and a fair and humane immigration system. Delegates recognised the importance of supporting our young members and a motion on how best to resource this was approved.

Our motion on Cornerstone Derecognition was the only one prioritised but unfortunately, despite this, it still wasn't reached, much to the disappointment of Mags and Pat.

Report can be accessed on: <http://aberdeenshireunison.org/>





'SCANDALOUS' DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT GAP

UNISON's branch Equalities Officer Kathleen Kennedy



spoke this year at Scottish Trade Union Council (STUC) annual congress where she called for employers' attitudes to the employment of disabled people to shift fundamentally.

It is an un-arguable fact that disabled people are less likely to be employed than other workers: "The employment gap is huge and scandalous. A forty per cent gap is not a number – it is a symbol of opportunities lost, potential denied and blighted lives. What is lacking is not so much employability on the part of disabled people, but a willingness

on the part of employers to employ more disabled people by providing inclusive workplaces and support.

And let's remember – discrimination against disabled people isn't just a scandal – it's against the law!"

Kathleen Kennedy has called for employers to be obliged to produce more meaningful statistics. She called for statistics to be published yearly on the employment of disabled people.

"Then we might see that employment gap is beginning to shift.

Disabled workers have a right to dignity and respect but above all we have a right to work."

Kathleen also reminded us of the call from the Disabled Members' Committee to make the year 2020-21 the year of disabled workers.

SCOTTISH BRANCH MAKES UNISON NATIONAL POLICY

2021 to be Year of the Disabled Worker

Unison's National Delegate Conference overwhelmingly backed a call from South Lanarkshire to make 2021 the year of the Disabled Worker.

This motion looked unlikely to be heard as we neared the end of the week, but when regions and self organised groups had the chance to reprioritise the agenda, the branch lobbied hard and persuaded them to support their motion.

It was reprioritised and to the branch's great delight, was heard almost with the last throw of the dice on the Friday afternoon of conference.

First time speaker, Karen Strain, moved the motion and called for 2021 to be a celebration of the successes and contributions of disabled people in the workplace, with an aim to challenge societal and environmental barriers to employing disabled people.



She joined the international condemnation of how the UK Government's policies affect disabled people and the lack of progress towards fulfilling the obligations set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 27 of the Treaty places a duty on the UK government to create the conditions that promote equal opportunity for disabled people in relation to work and employment.

She said: **"We've heard some grim stuff about how hard life is for the disabled in Tory Britain – the pay gap for disabled workers, those deliberately denied PIP and other supports.**

"It's hard for us to get into work in the first place and many disabled people are trapped in jobs far below their aspirations, qualifications and capabilities."

She urged: **"It must matter to all of us that the disabled are treated fairly at work."**

CORNERSTONE UPDATE – UNISON WINS THE RIGHT TO CLAIM STATUTORY RECOGNITION

In a major breakthrough in our union's battle to force recognition in Cornerstone, UNISON has been told that our application for the right to represent our members at Cornerstone can proceed.

The Central Arbitration Committee (CAC) ruled in UNISON's favour on 18th July opening the door to UNISON's application for statutory recognition.

Cornerstone ripped up a long-standing collective bargaining

deal last year following a dispute over the charity's strategic plan and pay.

UNISON Scotland's head of community Deborah Clarke paid tribute to the stewards and staff of Cornerstone for all their commitment and hard work during this time.

She said **"Cornerstone's attempts to breach our members' human rights by ripping up our collective bargaining agreement**

is disgusting and makes a mockery of the chief executive's status as a Scottish Government Fair Work Ambassador.

"In an effort to lay bare Cornerstone's actions by ignoring their staff we will be applying for statutory recognition, an unprecedented move and one that members across Cornerstone are confident we can achieve"

UNISON MAKES AN IMPACT AT ABERDEEN'S PRIDE EVENT



North East Scotland UNISON once again played their part in the Aberdeen Pride event on the 25th May. The sponsorship for this event was supported by all five N.E. branches and organised by a committee of LGBT+ and allies from across all branches with help from UNISON staff.



The next event being planned by this group is a pub quiz to celebrate 'Coming Out Day' on 11th October where it is hoped to make new contacts and increase the size of this group, whilst having fun and raising a bit of money for charity as well. Check 'Out in UNISON' newsletters using this link: <https://unison-scotland.org/out7/>



Deirdrie Macdonald & Martha Stewart

MORAY UNISON'S SURVEY RESULTS NEED IMMEDIATE ACTION

Action is needed by the council, say Moray UNISON, to protect staff in schools from verbal and physical abuse.

Early indications from the survey of staff show that a number of staff, including pupil support assistants, janitors and catering staff, report that **"they simply did**

not have the time, given the nature of their roles, to deal with such conditions at work."

Figures collected by the council itself revealed 980 violent incidents towards school staff in 2018, a huge increase of 48% over 2017.

Kelly Kinlin, a steward for

Education and Social Care, who is also a PSA, said: **"I fear for the safety of our already stretched support staff. Although PSAs have a very rewarding job they are also in a vulnerable position being subjected to both physical and verbal abuse sometimes multiple times a day."**

THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE ACTION SEES SIGNIFICANT WINS

Overwhelming votes for strike action by UNISON members in Queen Margaret University, Dundee and West Dunbartonshire have led to action by the employers to resolve the disputes.

At Queen Margaret University the employer withdrew plans for compulsory redundancies after UNISON members voted to strike. In Dundee,

the council abandoned its controversial plans to reduce pay protection, to cap flexible retirement at two years and to end its commitment to no compulsory redundancies. In West Dunbartonshire social work members agreed to suspend strike action after the council made a firm offer.

These wins have been reflected across the UK, with UNISON members building

confidence for action, winning a strike ballot, then the employer withdrawing the threat.

Congratulations to all members who have shown the power of collective action to defend jobs and services.



PATHWAYS COURSE REAPS BENEFITS FOR NORTH EAST MEMBERS

UNISON branches in the North East have reaped the benefits of running a Pathways residential course for 16 women from Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Grampian Health, with at least nine of the participants signing up for stewards' training.

Other participants were interested in roles such as workplace contact, union learning rep, education officer, international officer, or health and safety rep, or in joining a Black members' group.

Many of the participants came from campaigns that the branches have been

running in the community and voluntary sector and the home care sector.

Susan Kennedy, Karen Davidson and Sarah Duncan were the course tutors.

Karen said: **"Pathways is a great course for women. It's fun and informative and our participants enjoyed it so much."**

"Overall, we feel that the decision to run this course has reaped great reward for the members and branches in the North East."

"We will support and develop the participants into their chosen pathway into UNISON and look forward to offering more North East members the same opportunity to access this course again."



GET OUR FULL SUPPORT BY JOINING BEFORE YOU NEED US

Please see our website at: <http://aberdeenshireunison.org>

email: aberdeenshire@unison.co.uk or call: 01224 620 624 or write to

Aberdeenshire UNISON, Area Resource centre, 7 Alford Place, Aberdeen,

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