

Unison Border News

Unison Scottish Borders Newsletter

Spring 2024



Bringing you the latest Unison
Scottish Borders Branch News

AGM NEWS PAGE 5

BREAKING

Scottish budget does not go far enough to protect Scotland's vital public services

Kaymarie Hughes
Branch Secretary

As we enter into 2024, we are becoming more concerned about the future of public services. We are now in a position where both NHS Borders and Scottish Borders Council are facing substantial budget deficits. This means that changes are inevitable as they look at cutting services, reducing costs and possibly reducing staffing. It's never been a more important time to be part of UNISON.

Commenting on the budget announced at the end of December, UNISON's Scottish Secretary Lilian Macer, said: "The budget is a bad day for local services and deals a further financial blow to local councils who are already struggling to balance the books and to deliver the vital services our communities rely on.

"Our public services are on their knees due to years of underinvestment and the Scottish government's council tax freeze will be a disaster for local services. We need to see

investment in public services and a council tax freeze stops investment in public services, in schools and in the NHS.

"The Scottish government had the chance to make big choices to raise more money for Scotland's public services but while the measures on income tax are welcome, much more could and should have been done. We still have a government boasting of low business taxes at the same time that they are delaying urgent improvements to public services.

"The Deputy First Minister spoke of cutting the public service workforce – people need to be aware that job cuts mean service cuts. What communities across Scotland need is investment, not abandonment.

"While we welcome investment in the NHS, the Scottish government failed to say how this would be targeted to tackling the staffing crisis and ensuring proper funding so the safe staffing act can make the improvements the NHS so desperately needs.

"Given the Scottish government's commitment to become a fair work nation by 2025, it's concerning that there was no mention of

fair work anywhere in the budget statement, particularly in social care, a sector in crisis." Branch Secretary Kaymarie added, "your UNISON branch will be there fighting for your jobs and putting our members first and foremost. Now is the time to get involved and ensure that every workplace has a UNISON steward. We don't know what the future holds but we do know that NHS Borders and Scottish Borders Council are going to be forced to make some difficult decision. Only by standing together can we fight to protect both services and jobs".

£100 Win

Terry Dunthorne
Branch Organising Assistant

Every year we hold a £100 prize draw for those members who attend our AGMs. Last year our lucky winner was Adeline, who is a staff nurse at the Knoll Community Hospital.

Please remember you have to be, "in it to win it!" So look for us at various workplaces across the Borders in March or contact us to request a workplace AGM meeting in your workplace



Adeline Smart with her prize

Meet the team...

Kaymarie Hughes



Hi, I'm Kaymarie Hughes the Scottish Borders Branch Secretary and Local Government Lead Rep. As branch secretary, I am responsible for every day running of the branch and ensuring that we provide the service our members expect. I am the main contact for the wider union and with the help of Terry our organising assistant, I handle all the branch administration. I coordinate the branch stewards and act as the senior negotiator in industrial relation matters.

As the Local Government Lead, I am the lead negotiator with Scottish Borders Council and the most experience rep. I work with the council on various working groups like Health and Social Care, Equalities and Education. I co-ordinate campaigns and work on various UNISON committees and work streams including the Education Issues Group and Labour Link. This year I was newly elected as co convener of the Scottish LGBT+ Committee. I hold a seat on the pension committee and represent the joint trade Unions on Scottish Borders Pension Board.

I am the spokesperson for Scottish Borders Branch which means that I am often called on to give interviews for ITV borders or the local radio and newspapers, which is why some of you may recognise me. I am the main point of contact for UNISON Direct and the chances are if you contact the union, I will be the person that answers the phone or replies to your email.

Hugh Learmont



I am Hugh Learmonth. I work as a Regional home care Manager within Scottish Borders Council. I have worked for Scottish Borders Council since 2015, during this time I have had a number of roles in adult social care and I have experience within homecare and residential care settings.

I am the Scottish borders branch treasurer; Steward and I hold a seat on Scottish LGBT+ committee.

I have been active within UNISON for the last 3 years and have loved every moment of being part of a great team, knowing that we are making changes for the best for our members. Being part of UNISON is like being part of a family, that are always there to support you.

Tracy Murray



I am Tracy Murray I work as an assistant home care Manager within Scottish Borders Council. I have worked for Scottish Borders Council since 2006 within this time I have had several roles within Adult Social Care, I started as a support worker and progressed through the company being successful in achieving my HNC in social services and level 7 in management.

I am the Scottish Borders Branch Chairperson and a branch steward.

I have been active within unison for just over a year and have really enjoyed every moment of being part of the branch and knowing that what we do for our members can really make a difference.

Marc Everett



Hello, I am Marc Everett and I have been a steward and terms and conditions officer for a number of years. I work as a home school link worker at Hawick High School.

This year I have again represented and provided what I hope was useful advice to many members of Unison Scottish Borders Branch through phone calls/email and in person.

I continue to represent members on the Scottish Borders Pension Fund Committee and Board. As well as representing members at the Joint Trade Union Consultation. At these meetings service directors from all departments of Scottish Borders Council give monthly updates concerning future plans and developments in each area.

2024 will again be a financially challenging year for Scottish Borders Council. Unison will support members through any of the work-related issues these challenges may bring.

Susan Foster



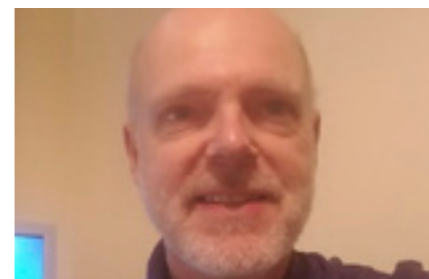
Hi I am Susan Foster. I am a new steward having put myself forward at last year's AGM meeting at Borders General Hospital. I really enjoyed my stewards training which I attended with Laura. It's been a steep learning curve but certainly something I would recommend to others. Its quite exciting getting involved in all the plans to grow and develop the health side of the branch. I'm looking forward to the launch of the new wellbeing campaign and newsletter that we are busy working on with Lynne our Area Organiser.

Terry Dunthorne



Hello, I am Terry Dunthorne and I work two days per week as the branch Organising Assistant. My role is to work with the Branch Secretary to support her in the administration of the branch. I also work with the treasurer to keep the branch finances in order. I am a point of contact for UNISON, stewards and members alike and if you contact the branch with an enquiry, its most likely that I will be the one to reply. New stewards will know me as the person who books them on their training and sends them all the paperwork. I completed my steward training way back in the day with Kaymarie and Karen. After leaving my role as an additional needs assistant and branch steward several years ago, I was given the opportunity to return in this role when the branch needed an organising assistant 3 years ago. In this time, I've seen a lot of changes and challenges. We are now in a really good place thanks to the dedication of our officers and regional organiser Greig and I'm proud to say the branch going from strength to strength.

Alistair Stavert



Hi, my name is Alastair Stavert and I have been a UNISON steward for five years. I am also a health and safety representative.

I work part-time, Wednesday to Friday in the Financial Inclusion Team in Gala when you can usually find me on the first floor above the Paton Street contact centre.

I have successfully represented members at a wide variety of attendance management, investigatory and disciplinary hearings. We never know what's round the corner so being a member of a strong trade union gives reassurance that if something does go wrong or advice is needed there's always someone who can help.

When not working or representing members I'm either out happily cycling round the Borders or less happily following the fortunes of St Johnstone Football Club.

Karen Lawrie



I am Karen Lawrie, Proud UNISON Steward and Partnership lead for Acute, NHS Borders.

I have been an activist for several years. What I believe in... I believe in the power of UNISON, we are 3 million led, I believe in defending all jobs from bands 2 to 8+, non-clinical and clinical, maintaining and improving safe working conditions. I believe in an all-inclusive workforce. I believe, with UNISON, we can and will rebuild our Beloved NHS, protecting our Staff and Patients future.

Lynne Williamson



Lynne Williamson, UNISON Area Organiser, my role is to support our wonderful and committed NHS Borders branch officers, activists and members. I started my UNISON journey as an activist, and I feel privileged to be in the position of supporting our members to think about taking that first step into being more active within UNISON Scottish Borders Public Service Branch. Becoming a UNISON member and activist is the best decision I ever made. It has been life changing.

Laura Green



Hello, I am Laura Green and I work as a Care Home assistant at Garden View in Tweedbank. I just completed my stewards training this year and I am beginning to take on case work. I really enjoyed the branch training days and getting to know everyone in the branch. I am looking forward to getting more involved and supporting others who work in social care. If you work in social care please consider becoming a steward there needs to be more of us fighting to improve working conditions and campaigning for better pay.

**5, 4, 3, 2, 1,
WIN!**

- 1 x voucher up to the value of £500
- 2 x vouchers up to the value of £250
- 3 x vouchers up to the value of £100
- 4 x vouchers up to the value of £50
- 5 x workplace visits from UNISON, complete with cakes and a goodie hamper for you and your colleagues!

All you need to do is :

Update your details via "my unison" website or by contacting the branch

Join UNISON on line

Recruit a friend. Contact the branch and let us know you who you have recruited

This will enter you into our grand prize draw in July.

School Support Staff Experience the most abuse from pupils

UNISON Press Office

New Scottish government research shows that the biggest impact of pupil's behavioural challenges falls on schools' support staff, who are the lowest paid and receive the least training and support.

The government's Behaviour in Scottish schools: research report 2023 shows that 86% of support staff encounter low level disruptive behaviour every day, with 66% experiencing verbal abuse and 59% experiencing physical aggression on a regular basis.

The union say that this new government report supports what UNISON members working in schools have been telling their union. That the lowest paid, mostly women support staff are the ones who are expected to deal with pupils with the most challenging behaviour.

The government report is based on surveys and interviews with head teachers and teachers and focus groups with classroom-based support staff. The report confirms that the incidence of serious disruptive behaviours has increased since the last report in 2016. There has also been a notable increase in primary school support staff saying they are negatively impacted by verbal abuse, physical aggression and violence towards themselves and other staff. UNISON say that support staff were more likely than teachers to report that serious disruptive behaviours have the greatest negative impact on them. UNISON Scotland chair of the education issues group, Lorraine Thompson said: "No-one should have to face violence and abusive behaviour at their work and if they do they need to be properly supported to deal with it.

Yet in our schools in Scotland, it is the lowest paid mostly women support staff who deal with challenging and disruptive behaviour every day. The money announced by the Scottish government is wholly inadequate for the challenges their own research outlines. We need substantial investment not only in our schools but also the wider support teams that children and young people need. UNISON Scotland regional manager, Kay Sillars said: "UNISON have consistently raised violence and abuse of school support staff with employers and government. Most support staff experience difficult behaviour every day. It is not acceptable, now that we have the evidence to back up what we know is a growing problem we need to see government funding and action to help schools deal with it. Support staff need to be provided with training, support and time to fully participate in developing strategies to support the pupils they are working with. But we also need increased investment in youth clubs, family social work and educational psychiatrists. UNISON are raising these findings with the government."

Violence in Schools & Early Years Survey

UNISON Press Office

We are urgently seeking your active participation in a vital initiative - the "UNISON Scottish Borders Against Workplace Violence" campaign, specifically focusing on Schools and Early Years settings.

Say No to Workplace Violence!

In our workplaces, every employee deserves a safe and secure environment, free from violence and aggression. The alarming rise in assaults on our fellow workers is a pressing issue that demands our collective action. It's time to rewrite the safety narrative together. You work hard to provide key services to your community, and it's time for your employer to keep you safe!

Facing the Stark Reality:

Violence and aggression are increasingly becoming major concerns in council workplaces. Shockingly, assaults by pupils, members of the public, or clients are a growing issue. In UNISON's 2023 Violence at Work Report, schools and nurseries accounted for between 80-98% of all violent incidents reported by councils in 2023, with most involving education support staff such as Additional Needs Assistants.

The Ongoing Consequences:

Workplace injuries and the stress from incidents lead to employee absence, affecting not only the injured but also placing added pressure on our hardworking colleagues. This stress has a ripple effect, resulting in challenges in managing our work, increased instances of lone working, and heightened risks of further issues.

Our Unified Strategy:

It's high time for a robust health and safety culture within our workplaces. We demand the following essential measures:

- Clearly defined reporting and investigation procedures
- Active consultation with health and safety representatives
- Empowering workers' voices to shape risk assessments and practices.

Your Voice Matters:

No council worker, especially those in Schools and Early Years settings, should ever

have to fear going to work. That's why we are launching a survey to hear from you, the dedicated individuals on the frontlines. Your experiences are of utmost importance, and together, we will work towards making our workplaces safe for all.

Please take a moment to share your experiences, as your input will help shape our campaign and create a safer environment for everyone. Our survey will close on Fri 22 March. increased investment in youth clubs, family social work and educational psychiatrists. UNISON are raising these findings with the government."



Coming to you in March

UNISON AGM MEETINGS

AGM Dates 2024

Kaymarie Hughes
Branch Secretary

Following on from last year's aggregate AGM's we have decided to return to the more successful drop-in meetings in a number of workplaces across the Scottish Borders

We have tried various ways to conduct our AGM's including formal meetings, evening online meetings and social nights however they continue to be very poorly attended.

We have worked hard to come up with a format that works well for our members. This is why we will be going out to workplaces across the Borders with our traveling AGM roadshow. There we can chat with members and answer any questions you may have, whilst we hand out our AGM packs. You will be asked to fill out the front attendance sheet, including casting your votes. After we have collected this sheet, you will be handed a bag of UNISON goodies as a thank you for taking part. You can then take the pack home to read at your leisure.

When visiting schools, we will deliver the packs to the office, or a unison contact for you to collect at the start of the day. We will return to collect them at the end of the day, leaving goody bags behind.

In other work setting we will base ourselves in staff rooms and common areas so staff can pop along and see us. The AGMs are very important meetings. Please make every effort to attend and participate. Only a quorate AGM gives the branch the mandate we need to continue our work to modernize and improve the service given to you, our members.

Please contact us if you would like us to visit your workplace.

Tuesday 5th of March

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|
| Hawick High School drop off | 9.30am |
| Hawick Community Hospital | 11.00am |
| Deanfield Care Home | 2.00pm |
| Hawick High School collect | 3.30pm |

Monday 11th March

| | |
|--|---------|
| Selkirk High School drop off | 9.30am |
| Dun Hospital | 11.30am |
| Lanark Lodge | 2.00pm |
| Berwickshire High School collect | 3.30pm |

Tuesday 12th March

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Jedburgh High School drop off | 9.30am |
| Kelso High School | 11.00am |
| Kelso Hospital | 11.30am |
| Grove House Care Home | 2.00pm |
| Kelso High School collect | 3.30pm |

Wednesday 13th March

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Borders General Hospital (Canteen stall) | 11.30am till 2.30pm |
|--|---------------------|

Thursday 14th March

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Selkirk High school collect | 9.30am |
| Peebles High School drop off | 10.30am |
| Peebles Hospital | 11.30am |
| Gala Academy drop off | 12.30pm |
| Garden View Care Home | 1.00pm |
| Waverly Care Home | 2.30pm |

Friday 15th March

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Eyemouth High School drop off | 11.00am |
| Saltgreen Care Home | 2.00pm |
| Eyemouth High School collect | 3.30pm |

Monday 18th of March

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------|
| Gala Academy collect | 3.30pm |
| Peebles High School collect | 3.30pm |

Financial Pressures hit Scottish Borders Council

Kaymarie Hughes
Local Government lead

As we come to the end of the Fit for 2024 programme, we see SBC start to put their new five-year plan into place. The new "Transformation Programme" will be used to look at major change for the next 5 years with the worrying financial position at the heart of the programme.

The new programme aims to make up to 30 million in savings by relying more on community engagement and focusing on constant improvement.

Both the rise in the cost of living and the social care crisis will be huge demands on resources as we move forward into the next era. There has been a huge range of projects going on in the council and we need to ensure we have a clear overview of these and their impact on services and staff. Going forward the Council needs to get better at consulting with staff and continue to come to the Joint Trade Unions with regular updates and workshops. There has been change in every service across SBC and we recognise how unsettling this can be for everyone.

In some of our local communities the Council have been working to encourage community groups to take responsibility for projects, by providing funding through the Area Partnerships. The area partnerships have been redesigned to put an emphasis on community and encourage people to be more involved in planning for their area. This will continue as SBC encourage local community groups and charities to apply for funding for projects, so community groups will take projects on and hold responsibility rather than it remain part of the councils offering.

Major developments like school campuses

are looking at more community input at the design point, so that they can meet the needs of the people who live in the surrounding area. The Jed campus is a good example of this and although it has not fully reached the potential, SBC report that they are working with partnerships and encouraging more community use. The much talked about corporate landlord model is progressing with an estates team looking at maximising the use of council owned buildings. There will be a push to sell off land and buildings where possible and to offer out the use of buildings to achieve income. There will be a lot of change as the Council look at the buildings they own and reducing the cost of the council estate where they can.

The most change continues to be the Council digital offering and the work continues at pace. There will be continued work to enhance business world, so that employees can have more engagement. Inspire learning is now embedded in our schools and UNISON have asked for feedback on the impact of inspire on attainment and behaviour and if this is improving especially in areas of deprivation. We have seen the change over to office 360 and the system admin review that is taking place. This is changing how we all work, as the council focuses on the customer experience whilst streamlining its systems. Pathfinder in social work is coming to completion and there is a huge amount of work going on with NHS on tech enabled care. We see the reduction in services such as night support, as staffing is reduced, and tech is brought in. Total mobile has now been introduced in social care and our recycling centres with staff being supplied with handsets and iPad to record information while they work. We have heard mixed reports on how staff view these

changes, and the impact on the work they do, but we do know they are here to stay.

Transport and travel will continue to be an area where spending is reduced. The council no longer hires cars after the introduction of a council owned fleet of cars and home working along with the use of Teams technology continue reduce the money spent of travel. Covid has had a profound impact on how we do things as a council and has brought change much quicker than we ever imagined.

To sustain services going forward we are told that positive transformation is critical. It is difficult to know if what has been done through Fit for 2024 has brought about all the savings that the council set out to achieve. But we do know that we are in a much better financial situation than many councils that are struggling to provide services within their budgets. Budgets are tight yet again and there will be savings to be met for the next 5 years. We are yet to see how this plays out, but we do know that every service in Scottish Borders Council will be tasked with making significant savings and that this will have an impact on the workforce and services.

It's never been more important to be part of a union, with service reviews, the influx of technology and budgets forcing changes to how we all work. As your Union we regularly meet with the council and service directors to stay abreast of these changes as they unfold.

Community Hospitals Interim Medical Model & Service Review

UNISON Press Office

Staff Briefing Friday 9th February 2024

Interim Medical Model – Kelso & Knoll Hospitals

Following the Executive Team's (BET) approval last month of the preferred interim option of shared Consultant and recruitment of an Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP), the BGH Acute service have been working with their senior medical team to identify options to provide 4 sessions of Consultant

Geriatrician time. A paper containing the options, along with risks and mitigations will be submitted to BET this month for decision. Recruitment to the ANP post is underway, the post having been advertised with a closing date of 07.02.24. Shortlisting and interviews will take place shortly.

Community Hospitals Review

As part of the wider Community Hospitals review, a number of activities are scheduled for the next 4 weeks. To support the definition and purpose of our Community Hospitals, Day of Care Audit (DOCA) events will take

place across all 4 Community Hospitals week commencing 26th February and staff will be provided with further information and advised of specific dates for their individual sites as soon as finalised by the project team. Further intelligence gathering will also focus on current costs associated with Community Hospitals, identification of other services currently located within the 4 Community Hospital buildings, and comparison of the Borders View (Ward 12 BGH) service model and staffing levels.

LGBT+ Conference November 2023



Kaymarie Hughes
Branch Secretary and Scottish LGBT+

Hugh and I arrived on the Thursday evening ready for Friday mornings networking meeting and caucus groups. We took part in a videotaped interview that was being made to promote the year of the LGBT+ worker 2024. This will be used on social media to promote Year of the LGBT+ Worker.

Saturday

Year of the LGBT+ worker

We started the day talking about using this year as an opportunity to reinvigorate our Self Organised Groups, aim to recruit a LGBT+ officer for each branch and ensure that this year achieves all the goal we set today.

Motion 3

Calling for Unison to look at how national conferences are organised to ensure that all religious holidays are observed and calling for conferences to be moved to Thursday to Saturday. This will reduce the cost to branches and help those who are caring or have caring responsibilities, to allow for more members to attend. Traveling on Sunday is often more

difficult and does not allow for people to have a rest day.

Watty Gaffney spoke on behalf of Scottish delegates who can travel over 600 miles to get to conferences and Sundays can have restricted services. Moving conference days will allow greater participation.

Motion to encourage participation from young members.

We have raised the age of young members to 31 to allow more time to develop young members in their activism before they age out. We need to use the year of the LGBT+ worker to encourage greater participation within our SOG.

In the afternoon we heard from the shadow equality minister who was questioned on the Labour Party's stance on gender reform. The motions that followed raised our concerns on hot topics such as the rights of LGBT+ refugees and asylum seekers and the worrying attacks on the rights of Trans and non-binary people in the UK by the Tory party and right-wing media.

Group debate

LGBT+ Asylum seekers and migrants calling for LGBT+ refugees to be given the protection from our government they deserve.

Sunday

Sunday began with us all being a little worse for wear after the LGBT+ Social night organised by the Liverpool branches. The social is a brilliant way to let of steam and reconnect with old friends from previous conferences. I joined my fellow delegates for a few drinks before returning back to my room to let Hugh and the younger delegates have their fun.

Conversion therapy.

We are now 4 prime ministers down since the Tory government declared they would ban conversion therapy however we are still in a situation where members of our community can still suffer this indignity. In Scotland there has been a delay of what we were promised would be the most total and inclusive banning of these therapies in the world. We will continue to fight with every ounce of our being until we achieve the ban.

ILGA Europe: The UK was top of the chart in 2014 for LGBT+ rights. We are now sitting in 17th place.

LGBT+ participation in sport.

There now appears to be a worrying shift towards a blanket ban for trans people to take part in many sports. A recent ban of transgender woman in chess being just one example of this. Conference calls for local branches to support their local inclusive and LGBT+ sports clubs. Moved by Scottish LGBT+ Committee member Stuart Cooper on behalf of Ayrshire Branch.

The conference ended with our usual the usual sing a long which everyone enjoys before we said goodbye to new friends and old that we will hopefully see again next year.

Hugh and I then headed to the train station to find several trains out of Liverpool had been cancelled and with it being a Sunday service it took six and a half hours to get back to Tweedbank station meaning that it was after 9pm when we both finally got home. Thank goodness we had both had the foresight to take annual leave on the Monday to allow us to recover.

Terms & Conditions Officer Report 2023

Marc Everett
Terms & Conditions Officer

This year I have again represented and provided what I hope was useful advice to many members of Unison Scottish Borders Branch through phone calls/email and in person.

In December 2023 our Branch attend a training event at which our Regional Officer Greg Kelbie

delivered a workshop on all aspects of

equality in the workplace.

This was followed by a workshop led by Danny Philips covering Communications and Media.

I continue to represent members on the Scottish Borders Pension Fund Committee and Board.

As well as representing members at meetings of Joint Trade Union & Managers meetings. At these meetings Managers from all departments of Scottish Borders Council give monthly updates concerning future plans and

developments in each area.

2024 will again be a financially challenging year for Scottish Borders Council. Unison will support members through any of the work-related issues these challenges may bring.





75th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

This summer we were delighted to be able to celebrate 75 years of OUR NHS

To celebrate we had a UNISON Stall with two huge birthday cakes, a giant card for members of the public to sign and post cards that people could write their birthday wish for the NHS on, to give to asking the Scottish Health Minister.

We also provide an ice cream van and offered free ice creams to all staff. It was a brilliant day for everyone, including the local Labour CLP who joined us to celebrate the creation of Our NHS, 75 years ago by Labour Health Minister Aneurin Bevan in 1948. Special thanks also due to Marcello who donated additional ice creams to allow everyone to get a free ice cream on the day.



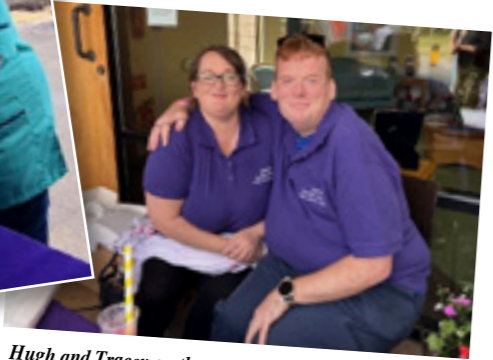
Giant birthday card



Lesley and Pamela from Borders Labour CLP



Signing a post card



Hugh and Tracey on the stall



A well-deserved cake break



Karen Kaymarie and Hugh



Home Carers Meeting in Eyemouth

Kaymarie Hughes
Branch Secretary

Since the return to normal ways of working your branch has been trying to get out and about more to meet with our members.

We were contacted by homecare workers from the Eyemouth area who were keen to meet with us to discuss some workplace issues. I was able to book a room in a local pub where we put on teas and coffees along with a huge pan of hot soup and bread rolls to warm everyone up.

The meeting was well attended and we were able to give some much needed advice and guidance and we were able to use the information they shared as examples of improvements that were needed at the joint trade union council meeting.

Members were delighted at the goodies we took along and as a result we were able to recruit new members and identify a potential new steward.

If you and your team would like to arrange a visit from UNISON, then please do not hesitate to contact the branch.



National Woman's Conference Report

Tracy Murray
Branch Chairperson

Bournemouth 16th to 18th February 2023

Unison National Woman's conference 2023 was my first conference experience as a delegate with Unison and its safe to say that I have had a great experience and made to feel very welcome as part of the Unison team whilst meeting other members from all over the country. I met women from the Scottish regions who were well travelled from the Shetlands to Dumfries and Galloway. I was very impressive to see the commitment to attend this conference. Over the three days it was filled with various workshops, seminars, and the conference itself.

80% of Unison members are woman. The cost-of-living crisis was at the heart of conference, with delegates from all over the country sharing their experiences of how hikes in bills, inflation and low incomes are impacting on members lives. With three times more woman in part time work than men and a fifth of woman being paid below the living wage woman are having to prioritise their finances with rent/mortgages, bills over long term goals like savings or pensions. Woman are going without food, heating and clothing to provide for their families, some having to make their own sanitary products to save money.

Day one

Conference was opened by guest speaker Angela Egan Unison Secretary who gave a passionate and warm welcome to all at conference.

Day one Conference debated motions 1 to 11 with some upsetting debates from some of the young members who delivered how they are trying to cope with the cost of living crisis. They spoke of their struggles of how to live and cope during the cost of living crisis and how not being able to afford basic food supplies, heating and often having to share homes with various other people is resulting in living, eating and working in their bedrooms as they don't have space or can't afford to go anywhere else was really affecting their mental health. One young member spoke about how she wondered if she took their own life then it would be an end to what she and her family were experiencing, taking the pressure of her mother to support her when her mother is struggling to support herself.

Day two

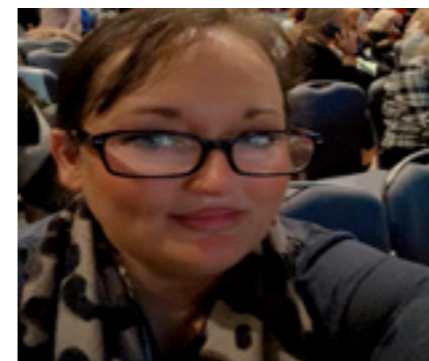
We started conference with a speech from UNISON's General Secretary Christina McAnea who thanked everyone attending the first Woman's conference in 3-year due to the pandemic. Christina talked about her experiences of being the first woman General Secretary and the barriers she faced being a woman in her role, however UNISON now

has more woman leaders in the trade union that 30 years ago.

Christina spoke about how proud she was to see loads of Green and Purple on the picket lines and drove up the Northeast of the country in support on the strikes, "it's the jobs that you do that make my job easy" Christina spoke about the amazing woman every day in this job, woman whose lives have been changed for the better by our Union, who go on to change other people lives for the better. Christina talked about the right-wing media and the Tory politicians still using language of the 70's when attacking the trade unions and how they talk disparagingly about trade union barons holding the country to ransom. Christina asked delegates what kind of world you would like to see in 20 to 30 years. Christina said she would like to see a world where woman, black people, people with a disability, LGBT+ and trans people can be exactly who they want to be without fear of assault and persecution, "I am determined to build woman leaders in our union and we can all play a part, we need to be focused, we need to be bold, and we need to be loud as a woman in our unions and make change happen"

Day two motions 12 to 21 were delivered and voted for. All very powerful motions delivered. Motion 21 Equality act and menopause which was the 1st motion of the conference that had for and against debates which lead to some interesting debates around the equality act and were asking for it not to go forward due to the impact on the trans community as they are having difficulties with this government and if we opened this to be included in the equity Act then this could affect other issues in the Act. Tran's member Sophie from Northeast branches asked for us to think about what this would do to someone like Sophie and to vote against it, which the motion was voted against. 2023 is the year of the Black worker/member, following on from the 2022 year of the disabled worker/members. At conference many Black members spoke of how poverty rates are higher amongst Black, Asian and Ethnic minority groups and that Black woman are more likely to earn less and have more concerns about debt. 43% of Black woman said they believed they would be in more debt since the pandemic, compared with 37% of white woman.

To summarise, it's been a powerful and emotional experience listening to the motions, the passion and hard work that all the women presented themselves was an inspiration to be part of. I am not one for putting myself out there and many of them like myself were 1st time delegates to watch them get up and share their stories, some personal experiences which you could see was hard for them to talk about has inspired me to fully commit to make a difference and contribute to all the good work that Unison does for their members.



Team UNISON NHS Borders

Lynne Williamson
Area Organiser Health

Team UNISON NHS Borders of UNISON Scottish Borders Public Service branch has been busy out and about meeting members in the workplace.

To date the team has visited and received a warm welcome from existing and new members at:

Hawick, Hay Lodge, Kelso, and Knoll Community Hospitals where we listened to members concerns regarding the review of community hospitals and health services in the Borders. Our branch officers attended all the Time for Change

Conversations run by NHS Borders to ensure our members views were represented and voices heard.

Borders General Hospital where we launched UNISON's Safe Staffing Survey. Lots of staff took time out of their lunch break to complete the survey and talk about the staffing challenges they face and the impact these have.

East Brig, Huntley Burn, Lindean and Borders Specialist Care Dementia Unit where members raised their concerns and worries regarding the significant financial challenges faced by NHS Borders.

is no legal requirement to provide 90 days' notice for a change, but NHSB will consult with staff and provide reasonable notice in these circumstances. What is reasonable notice?



NHS Public Board

Karen Lawrie
NHS Lead

NHS Borders Public Board met on February 1st, 2024, to set out the significant financial challenges facing our NHS borders. There is a financial deficit of up to £30 million and without any costs savings being made this overspend will rise to around £45 million at the end of March 2025 because of inflation, responding to increase in demand, the cost of investment needed to deliver new health services and technologies. This will be wholly unsustainable. NHS Borders have come up with a plan of action which targets nonclinical staff who no

longer have rights to overtime, discretionary spends.

There is now a vacancy control panel and a grip and control panel to make it extremely difficult for a vacancies to go out for recruitment.

Notice of Change I have been made aware NHSB does not recognise the requirement for a 90-day notice period for change, so asked for this to be confirmed in writing. NHS Borders confirmed that the requirement for 3 months notice is for circumstances where a staff member has over 12 years service with an employer and there is a need to bring the contract to an end. It was confirmed that this is in line with employment legislation. There

Safe Staffing Act – Safe Staffing Now!

UNISON Press Office

UNISON Health activists met recently to discuss how the Scottish Governments commitment to implement the Safe Staffing legislation on 1 April 2024 will affect NHS branches and members.

The Act was first agreed in 2019 and applies to a number of prescribed workers across the NHS in Scotland as well as some areas within social care, but with no real direct sanction for failure to achieve safe staffing, it is hard to see how the Act will actually improve staffing levels or have a positive impact on care – at least in the short term.

The Act does give NHS workers more powers raise concerns over staffing and standards of care and UNISON sees this added power as a key tool in the organising approach we need to develop.

The unions Head of Health, Scotland, Matt McLaughlin said, “This particular government has a bit of a record on setting targets and failing to deliver on them, you just need to look at AE waiting times, or their commitment to reduce delayed discharge, so there was certainly some scepticism amongst our NHS activists who met to discuss how UNISON should support members around Safe Staffing.”

Wilma Brown, Chair of the Scottish Health Committee said, “Our health branches were crystal clear, whilst UNISON welcomes the legislation, we see that as the beginning of the journey, not the end.

UNISON Scotland will ensure that our members who are affected by this legislation have a voice, use that voice and critically that their voice is heard!” The first stage of the emerging campaign will see thousands of UNISON members in the NHS surveyed to determine just how aware they are of the new Act and what power it gives them. Please follow the QR code to take our short survey on safe staffing!



The UNISON stall at Perth Pride

Year of the LGBT+ Worker

Kaymarie Hughes

Scottish LGBT+ Convener and LGBT+ Officer

This year I was delighted to be elected as the co convener for Scotland’s LGBT+ Committee, which was made even more special by coinciding with UNISON’s Year of the LGBT+ Worker.

As a regional committee we are working with the national committee to set a timetable of events and activities aimed at improving the rights of LGBT+ workers across the UK. There has been an employer check list produced to encourage employers to check that they have robust policies in place for all employees and that those who have different genders or sexualities are not discriminated against.

There have been packs produced for every branch which include promotional materials and ideas on how they can get more active. We are encouraging branches to attend Pride events across the UK to show solidarity and recruit new members and activists. Hugh and I attended LGBT+ Conference in Liverpool where we took part in a promotional video that asked people about what made them become active in UNISON as a member of the LGBT+ community. This video will be used on social media across the UK.

Here in Scotland, we are asking every branch of UNISON to elect a LGBT+ Officer at their AGM. This is a role that I have held in the borders for many years, however there are very few branches that have someone in this post at the moment. The LGBT+ officer role is to support LGBT+ members and their employers to improve working conditions and highlight incidents of homophobia and transphobia wherever they may occur. They are LGBT+ Equality Champions and there to be a safe and supportive contact, for those that identify as LGBT+.

As a co convener I will be working closely with the other co convener Watty Gaffney, to give presentations to branches on how that can better support their LGBT+ members and we will be promoting the UNISON Learning, Trans Ally training. This online training is available to all branches and their members and we are hoping that in the future we can bring this brilliant

course down to the borders for our members to attend in person.

Hugh Learmonth is also part of the committee and throughout the year we have been attending working groups, STUC LGBT+ Conference and Prides. This year we had stalls at 19 different Prides across Scotland and between Hugh and I we attended West Lothian, Perth and Edinburgh Prides, providing a stall and marching in the parade. We spoke to many UNISON members who were delighted to see us there and we recruited new members who were keen to join a union that supports their community.

Here in the borders branch, we have funded some of the important work that local charity, Scottish Borders LGBT Equality do to reduce isolation and loneliness by providing regular groups and events including Café Polari a monthly social meet up that provides a safe space to meet and eat. Trans Gen, which is a monthly meet up for the transgender community in the Borders.

We also provided sponsorship for an International Women’s Day comedy event, Women in Stand up. Which was an event for all women that encouraged them to develop the skills and confidence to take part in a stand-up workshop and eventually perform at a special night during the Edinburgh Comedy Festival. This was a collaborative event with Scottish Borders LGBT+ Equality, and Borders Rape Crisis.



As you can see it’s been a busy year with 2024 set to be even busier for us all. If you identify as LGBT+ and would like to speak to Kaymarie or Hugh or if you would like to get more involved, please contact the branch.

Disabled Members Conference

Linda Clotworthy

Disabled Members Officer

At the end of October, I went to the disabled members conference which was held in Edinburgh. Where we heard from Unison’s General Secretary Christina McAnea via video link where she spoke about taking to parliament the disability employment charter and that 150 employers are signed up to the charter so far. She also spoke about how important the work is that we all do regarding disabilities.

We also heard from MSP for Glasgow, Pam Duncan Glancy and from Libby Nolan President of Unison who spoke about the current state of the nation, impacts on unions, families having to rely on food banks when we’re 5th richest nation in the world, the black hole in council’s finance.



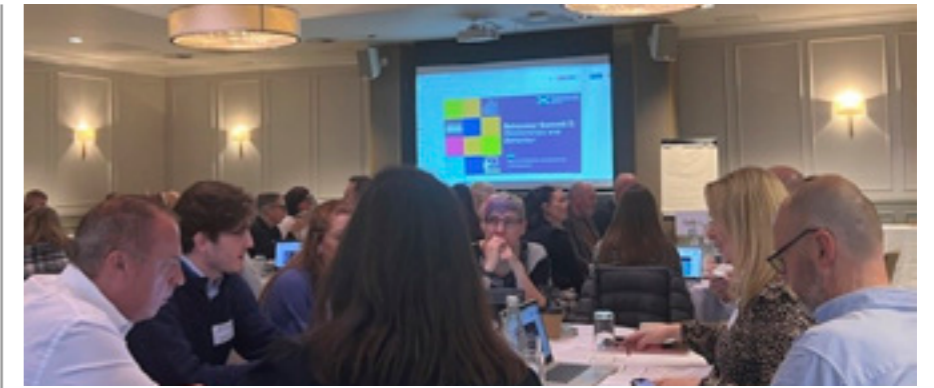
Equalities Update

Linda Clotworthy

Disabled Members Officer

As Equalities officer for the branch and Disabled members representative for the branch, this past year has been extremely busy.

Within NHS borders there have been three staff networks set up : Ethnic Minority Staff network, LGBTQIA+ staff network and the Disability staff network. Open to all staff who work for NHS borders who recognise themselves as being part of these groups. The networks are a safe place where staff can receive peer to peer support and discuss issues that directly affect them in the workplace.



Behaviour and Relationships in Schools Working Group

Kaymarie Hughes

Branch Secretary

I was extremely fortunate to be asked by the Education issues Group to attend a working group with Scottish Government looking at behaviour in Schools. I was the only Trade Union representative of school support staff included in the working group therefore my feedback was crucial to ensure that our members voices were heard.

I was able to speak about some of the experiences that our members here in the borders have shared and explain that although they are often at the sharp end of challenging and aggressive behaviours, they are often not included in risk assessments, pupil plans or meetings around the child.

Our members reported that they are often left feeling unsupported, that they do not receive enough support after an incident and that they are often made to feel as if its part of their job. Whilst this working group is meeting on a regular basis there has been a review of behaviour and relationships in schools throughout the whole of Scotland. Every High school has fed back along with over 300 primary schools taking part. School staff completed a survey and health and safety data was collected from every school.

There was a launch of the report by Scottish

Government, and I was invited to bring two members along to the event. The members fed back that they had found the event informative and a true representation of their experience working in their own schools.

When the report was collated, it was apparent that school support staff were the ones that were experiencing the most challenging behaviours on a regular basis. Teaching staff felt that they experienced the most low-level disruptive behaviours that impacted on their ability to manage a classroom and deliver a lesson.

We are now at a point in the working group where we are using the information in the report to put together recommendations on how schools should manage behaviour and grow healthy respectful relationships in schools. This is an ongoing piece of work that I will continue to be involved in and the branch will be surveying our members in schools to get a better understanding of their experiences with the view of launching a campaign to ensure that our members are included in planning, risk assessments and receive the same level of support as teaching staff in the event of an incident.

We believe our members deserve to feel safe in their workplace and know that there are robust measures in place to protect them.

Update your UNISON details



0800 0 857 857

To take part in our consultations, surveys and ballots, we need accurate information: your work, email & mobile.



Branch Development Days

Kaymarie Hughes
Branch Secretary

This year we found ourselves in the most fortunate position of having recently recruited several new stewards which enabled us to have our first ever planning and development days.

During those days we looked at how we worked together better as a branch and planned for the year ahead. We took part in training sessions on planning a campaign, identifying possible workplace representatives and how to improve our communication skills.

It was a fantastic opportunity to get to know one another better and to build stronger working relationships. As a branch we are in one of the best positions we have been in a long time with four new fully train stewards and a further five waiting to attend their five-day training. This allows us to better represent you, our members and means that we can be much more visible in the

workplace than ever before.

We hope that the coming year continues to see us grow and that the new stewards complete their training and join our dynamic team. This does not mean that we do not need to continue to recruit new stewards, as here in Local Government we aim to recruit a steward in every school, care home, roads depot and department in the council. In Health they have been working with our new Area Organiser to visit all our hospitals, health centres and health care units to recruit new members and new stewards.

If you are interested in getting involved or would like us to come to your workplace, please contact

terry.dunthorne@unisonscotborders.org.uk.

Call To Recognise Long Covid as an Industrial Disease

UNISON Press Office

UNISON Scotland has taken a key role in a steering group on long Covid as part of the Scottish Employment Injury Advisory Council (SEIAC). Roz Ronan, Chair of the UNISON Scotland Welfare Committee is our representative - a role that has taken her to the heart of the Scottish Government.

In November, Roz was part of a delegation to the Scottish Parliament, calling on the Scottish Government to recognise long Covid as an industrial disease and backing Mark Griffin, MSP's call for a new advisory body on industrial injuries. She made a powerful speech, describing how many sufferers caught Covid at their work, and she shone a light on the plight of care workers with long Covid, describing how previously fit and healthy people have been completely debilitated. Roz told of a particular care worker, who contracted long Covid, describing her as a shadow of her former self. "She has been told she will never fully recover. The physical damage and related mental health issues can be overwhelming on a daily basis, affecting her wellbeing, self-confidence and self-worth," adding that "there was no guidance out there, you just had to get on with it, the best you can. "It's extremely heart-breaking when workers find they can no longer do the job they love and have done expertly for so long. We can't put a bandage on this and hope it goes away. We have to recognise this is an often-invisible condition, yet it's changing people's lives leaving many facing a really challenging future."

Roz highlighted the importance of Mark Griffin's Bill, a bill that the Social Justice and Social Security Committee has since declined to back. The Scottish Government has promised a new industrial injuries benefit which could financially benefit long Covid sufferers but has dragged its feet over implementing it.

Roz said: "Long Covid simply has to be recognised as a debilitating condition which in most cases was contracted through a work place environment." She pledges that SEIAC will continue to meet to find ways to get justice for long Covid sufferers and called on the government to put Scotland on the map and demonstrate the way forward – "to show that we can show empathy and give hope to our workers who have experienced life changing disability."

The Staffing Social Care

Kaymarie Hughes
Branch Secretary

Things have been exceptionally difficult this year for our staff in Social Care with a large number of vacancies and a record spend of agency staff.

Members have contacted us to raise their concerns about the impact of so many agency staff working in their area and the lack of continuity in care. Staff report feeling overworked, under paid and undervalued as they see agency staff being given the pick of shifts, easier, more central visits and being paid more for the privilege.

Our members tell us that they are working flat out, often task and go with as many visits as they can do on a shift. We spoke to new staff who felt they had not received a proper induction, had to arrange their own shadow shifts and not been given the chance to familiarise themselves with vehicles before being expected to go out on shift.

We know that all staff including assistant and home care managers are feeling the pressure caused by staffing vacancies and although there are changes coming to how they work, it may add to the pressure rather than relieve it.

That is why, we will be coming to you with a new survey, so you can tell us your views and what you are experiencing. Work is going on to look at adjusting how you work to better meet the demands of the service using the limited resources and staff that are available. This will ultimately lead to looking at shift patterns and rotas.

As a trade union we are involved in working groups and therefore it is essential that we know what you, our social care members want. As your representative in these working groups, I would feel uncomfortable about making suggestions or demands without proper consultation. That is why UNISON stands alone in its resolve to survey our members before agreeing to changes. We are keen to know your views and what you like about the current 8-week rota and what you would be willing to change.

The survey will form part of our new "Dare to Care" campaign where we aim to highlight the astounding spend on agency workers and call for better wages for social care workers as a means to better recruitment and retention. What can you do? Please make sure that we have your correct contact details including an email address to allow us to send out the survey. Speak to your colleagues and encourage them to join UNISON. There is a QR code in the magazine that allows you to join, recruit a friend or update your details. Anyone who does will be entered into a prize draw to win one of 19 prizes with the top prize of £500 in shopping vouchers.

NHS Scotland Pay Campaign 2024/25

UNISON Press Office

UNISON Scotland, together with other unions, has submitted a joint pay claim to the Scottish government for all workers who are in the Agenda for Change (AfC) pay system.

The pay claim is calling for negotiations to secure:

- An offer in which NHS AfC pay is uplifted by a cost-of-living element which fairly rewards our members in the current financial climate and seeks to resolve historic erosion of their pay.
- A robust fully funded proposal to deliver on the areas of consensus previously identified in the AfC Pay Modernisation paper, which does not divert funding from the core pay quantum, during the lifetime of any implementation phase.
- A commitment to further discuss those areas of AfC pay modernisation where consensus could not be reached.

You can read the full pay claim on the UNISON Scotland website.

What happens next?

We know that pay matters to you and that is why pay is our number one priority.

It is now up to the Scottish government to respond to our claim. UNISON has made it clear that our members will not accept any unreasonable delay. We are working towards getting something agreed as close to April 2024 as possible.

Non-pay reforms

There were 'non pay' reforms agreed as part of the 2023/24 pay deal. The Scottish government, unions and employers were tasked with bringing forward proposals for a review of band 5 nurses; to reduce the working week with no loss of pay; and to protect time for learning at work. We are disappointed that the Scottish government has not yet put forward proposals to implement these promised reforms.

UNISON, with other health unions, sent our

proposals to the cabinet secretary for health, Michael Matheson MSP, in November. UNISON has been in regular contact with the cabinet secretary pressing him to publish an implementation strategy as soon as possible.

In mid-January, the cabinet secretary wrote to unions asking for an urgent meeting. UNISON is always available to meet with government ministers and employers, however, the NHS unions have also written to the minister to make clear we expected him to publish an implementation plan without delay.

It is not acceptable that the Scottish government has not published an implementation programme for the outstanding elements from the 2023/24 deal. We are clear the Scottish government needs to deliver on what's been promised.

Get ready for the months ahead

Please look out for future information on these crucial issues. In the meantime, you can help us to get ready for the months ahead:

- Make sure your details are up to date by contacting the branch.
- Keep in touch with your local UNISON branch.
- Please fill out our safe staffing survey – scan the QR code.
- Ask your colleagues to join unison – we are stronger together.
- Check our website for the most up-to-date information and look us up on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter)



The Team: A well-deserved dinner after a very successful two days of planning and training

Just for Laughs!!!

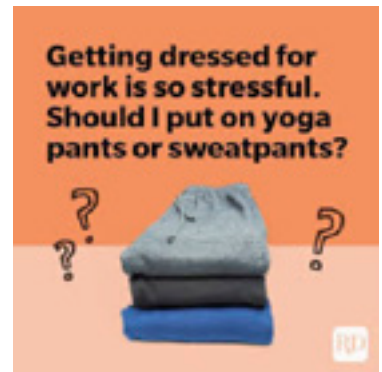


“Its Insta Baby!”



Hugh and Kaymarie striking a pose on Brighton Pier

What a joke...



Early Night?



While the young ones enjoy the “Social life” after conference Kaymarie enjoys an early night.

Keep Dancing!



Regional organiser Grieg practicing for “Strictly”.