College staff win pay cap busting deal

Unison negotiators have won a a flat rate pay rise of £425 for Further Education members in Scotland from 1 April 2017 plus five days’ additional annual leave.

UNISON will be recommending the deal to its members.

John Gallacher, UNISON Scotland head of bargaining, said: “This exceeds the pay cap for those who earn under £22k.

“The deal represents 2.6% at the bottom end (Living Wage level) and more than 1% for all those who earn less than £42k - the vast majority of support staff.

“This is the third year in a row that UNISON has led negotiations to achieve better than pay policy for some 5,500 workers in 20 Scottish colleges.”

The 2015 pay talks saw industrial action by EIS, and 2016 saw national strikes by UNISON, GMB and EIS. Up to 2015 pay and conditions were determined at individual college level.

UNISON FE Committee chair Chris Greenshields said: “This proposal breaks the government’s 1% pay cap in the public sector but it is still not overly generous given inflation is at 2.8%.

“The Scottish Government needs to seriously review its position across the board of pay bargaining with fair pay re-introduced across the public sector for 2018.”

Committee vice chair Shirley Septon, added: “If there is to be a generational shift on how college staff are deployed and remunerated, any money spent should be seen as a transformational investment in Scotland’s future, not a source of further efficiency and austerity approaches to negotiations.

“Scotland’s FE students deserve the best support services available and our members are committed and motivated to deliver quality in the sector. This is a reasonable first step but there is a long way to go.”

UNISON has been particularly pleased with the flat rate settlement, bringing the same cash deal for all.

John Gallacher added: “We have also achieved, through three years of national bargaining, a national working week of 35 hours and a minimum leave entitlement of 44 days - the best in the public sector.”

UNISON mounts NHS ‘Scrap the Cap’ campaign

UNISON has launched a summer of campaign activity calling on the Scottish government to scrap the cap on NHS pay rises, which will include the union and its members lobbying Scottish Government Ministers on pay as they carry out their annual round of NHS Board Reviews.

Tom Waterson, Chair of the Scottish Health Committee has offered a cautious welcome to media speculation that the Scottish Government are committed to lifting the 1% pay cap, just weeks after the union launched ‘Scrap the Cap’.

“Of course we welcome the commitments made by Scottish Ministers in the chamber that they will scrap the pay cap, but with no detail on what that will mean. Lifting the 1% cap is one thing, delivering an above inflation pay rise across the NHS is something else.” Health branches across Scotland are being asked to step their campaigning in response to a formal proposal by the Scottish Government to enter into direct pay bargaining whilst joint research is commissioned on NHS pay by unions, Scottish Government and the Scottish employers.

Tom Waterson continued: “The Pay Review Body lost any pretence of independence when it awarded a below inflation 1% pay rise to NHS workers.

“The Scottish government’s suggestion that we dump the Pay Review Body and deal with pay in Scotland by negotiation is supported by UNISON and we will be using our influence over the summer to secure a conclusion which sees the Pay Review Body retained.”

Local government workers pay action vote beaten by turnout law - Page 2
Scotland\r
UNISON page 2 July 2017

Scrap the Cap

From page 1
Review Body consigned to the bin as we campaign to “Scrap the Cap.”

The union’s summer campaign will coincide with the annual review process which takes place in all NHS Scotland health boards. UNISON vows to be “seen and to be heard” in the lead up to and at each and every event.

Matt McLaughlin, UNISON’s head of health for Scotland, said: “UNISON is the only union in the NHS with the grass roots organisation and resources to organise and sustain a campaign like this. Across Scotland, UNISON activists and members will be seen and heard as we demand that the government ‘scrap the cap’ and whilst media comments and parliamentary statements are welcome, there will be no let up in the UNISON campaign until we’ve well and truly scrapped the cap.”

Conference vote for pay action beaten by turnout law

Despite UNISON members voting by 62.7% for strike action on council pay, the action could not go ahead because the turnout did not reach the 50% required by new law.

The union has therefore now written to the employers seeking implementation of the pay offer which was:

A flat rate increase of £350 for all staff up to £3,000 (based on a 37 hour week).

For those above £3,000 a 1% uplift will apply.

Council will commit to using the Scottish Local Government Review Board as the minimum pay level for all pay and allowances including additional hours worked, contractual overtime and other allowances/premia (where applicable) and it will be pensionable.

COSLA Employers agree to participate in a joint working group with the trade unions tasked with developing a framework that both sides can sign up to.

The offer is for one year from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Conference in brief

Brexit: NI peace process must be protected

UNISON will spearhead a campaign to protect the Northern Ireland peace agreement. There is no priority in EU exit negotiations, amidst fears that a hard Brexit will result in the return of a border across the island of Ireland which will damage its fragile but hard won peace.

Support for WASPI pension campaign

Conference pledged to continue its support for Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) following on from UNISON Scotland’s support and the STUC’s support in April.

Public housing only way to solve crisis

UNISON will call for a restoration of direct investment in public housing as the only way to resolve the housing crisis, with Renfrewshire’s Brenda Aitchison calling for public landlords to be democratically accountable.

Support confirmed for ‘women’s right to choose’

UNISON Scottish Council has reaffirmed its support for a woman’s right to choose in terms of abortion and Scotland’s Davena Rankin made a powerful and reasoned speech:

“The motion is not calling for a celebration of abortion, but a celebration of women taking control of their lives”, she said.

End of an era as Jane steps down after 30 years at the top

UNISON will lose one of its best known leaders as Jane McArthur retires after 30 years with the union.

Jane has been a long standing and effective leader in Scotland, always standing up for the rights of public service workers.

It’s not about getting the best possible deal in the circumstances, but creating the circumstances to get the best possible deal.”

JANE CAROLAN

by John Stevenson

SU editor

Scotland’s Jane Carolan, chair of UNISON’s national policy committee, stood down at the end of last year after 30 years at the leadership of the union.

The journey to UNISON NEC member and chair of the TUC General Council and its ruling Executive Committee, started in the 1980s in the Glasgow District branch of Nalgo.

Passionate about equalities at a time when it was an uphill struggle, Jane was elected to Nalgo’s National Women’s Committee in the mid 1980s.

She was then elected to the NEC and became chair of the influential Policy Committee.

By 2003 she was a member of the TUC General Council and its Executive Committee.

Organising

Personal recognition is not something Jane has ever craved. Staging up for equality and working class consciousness was just what you do.

But she did take some pride in the fact that some women had told her “You’ve made it alright to be a woman in a leadership position.” That says a lot about her achievements in those days.

When you tell her, the agenda always comes back to organisating.

“Committees don’t make policy, but working together with everyone having a hand and a role in developing the objective, does”, Jane explained.

Jane regrets that the union is not so political these days. “All we do in a trade union is and should be political. Politics affects all parts of our lives”, she said.

But when so many people say they don’t see politics as relevant, what do we do about it?”

“I dare say we need to do something about class consciousness?” asked Jane.

“There’s almost too much focus on keeping members happy when sometimes it should be about making them angry - that’s what will get them to take action at the end of the day.”

“It’s not about getting the best possible deal in the circumstances, but creating the circumstances to get the best possible deal.”

When asked about significant achievements over the last 30 years, Jane was absolutely clear. “Getting equal pay in Local Government and in the Health Service. We don’t blow our trumpet enough about it.”

Jane has also long been a strong internationalist involved in the Chile, Nicaragua, and Palestine solidarity movements.

Jane’s ‘retirement’ will include activism in CND (‘it’s in my blood’), being a women of Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI), ‘stuff’ for the Institute of Employment Rights, being a Children’s Panel Member and getting back to writing.

So does Jane have any advice for the future?

Her head throws back and that guffaw of a giggle takes over (one that has got her into trouble before when I have made a quip in her ear during formal proceedings).

Pat Rowland: UNISON Scotland’s first and only treasurer retires

It’s not about getting the best possible deal in the circumstances, but creating the circumstances to get the best possible deal.

Staff side secretary Dougie Black said: “In intimating our acceptance we have urged the employers to recognise that the outcome of our ballot was to take industrial action, however it was the thresholds in the new Trade Union Act 2016 that prevented this from happening and that pay remains a high priority for our members.”

The union has agreed with the Scottish employers that there should be early talks to develop a joint approach or campaign to influence the outcome of the Scottish Government’s Spending Review and to seek additional funding for local government - part or all of which can be targeted towards improving pay.

UNISON also wants an early meeting of the Pay Strategy Group to agree on a planned programme of work with a joint commitment to conclude the work of the group by December 2017.

As we went to press, negotiators were still awaiting formal confirmation of the terms of our acceptance.

End of an era as Jane steps down after 30 years at the top

“Organise!” said Jane. “Get back to the broad trade union principles. Single issue campaigns have their place. But whether low pay, benefit cuts or child poverty, they all have significant implications behind them that we need to understand and communicate to our members.”

In a message to delegates at Conference, Jane said: “I have always been proud of the role Scotland plays in the union, taking forward radical projects that have shaped the political agenda and modernised our union to make it fit for purpose.

“I have always felt that in Scotland we dealt with things in a comradely manner and respected collective responsibility when decisions are taken. That’s the way things should be.”

Jane Carolan has always been true to herself, consistent in the convictions she holds and accountable to the people she serves. She is a tireless campaigner for socialism and women’s rights.

She has never been afraid to take responsibility and articulate the difficult issues. You will never hear in any doubt about her views on a subject but you will always be able to debate it with her.

There’s not many like her left and UNISON will be the poorer without her.

(See unison-scotland.org.uk/news/conf2017) for the full interview with Jane.

Pat Rowland speaking at this year’s STUC Congress

Pat has also been active in Labour Link having chaired the Scottish Committee for a period. And she has carried NALGO and UNISON’s case into the Scottish employers that had a similar sense of responsibility and collective responsibility when decisions were taken. That’s the way things should be.”

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Pat Rowland speaking at this year’s STUC Congress

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Scottish convener Lillian Macer, paying tribute to Pat at Scottish Council, said: “Pat, your immense contribution has been greatly valued by your colleagues.

“In wishing you well in retirement we know that you’ll still be keeping a hand in. We wish you an enjoyable and well deserved time.”

Pat’s place will be taken by Elaine Duffy of the Scottish Electricity Branch.

Support for WASPI pension campaign

Conference pledged to continue its support for Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) following on from UNISON Scotland’s support and the STUC’s support in April.
Save the planet and our pensions investments

UNISON Scotland, in the form of Stephen Smellie, won Conference backing for a campaign for divestment of fossil fuel extraction from our pension funds for the sake of our planet while also warning that fossil fuels pose a risk to our pension funds.

Stephen said: “We need a successful investment strategy to pay our pensions. However we do have a wider interest – good pensions might not help if the planet is frying.”

“Our kids and grandkids won’t thank us if they have to deal with more extreme weather conditions, poisoned air, and a shortage of drinking water leading to millions of deaths, and a refugee crisis that will make the last few years seem like nothing.”

Stephen explained that when governments do actually honour existing agreements to keep the temperature rise below 2°C, the value of fossil fuel reserves and shares prices of BP, Shell and other such companies will drop, and so will the value of our pension fund investments.

“We need to propose alternative strategies that will be more socially useful and less environmentally damaging at the same time as making the necessary return on investments. It could be renewable energy, social housing or public transport.”

Glasgow’s Nora Adeyemo supported and also warned of the dangers of fracking.

Organising to tackle crisis in social care

UNISON Scotland took the message to National Conference that social care workers are a pressurised and a growing section of the public sector workforce but there are significant challenges to organising them.

Scottish convenor Lilian Macer was backing for our motion calling for an organising strategy specific to these workers to support them to expand their roles and to meet regulatory requirements.

Separate motions underlined the crisis in social care and the risk that integration will become a front for cuts.

Scotland NEC member Jane Cardlan told delegates “This union pioneered the Ethical Care Charter, a gold standard. “But we can do more to fight for universal, publicly provided care services.”

NHS Glasgow Clyde and CVS member Una Provan told the Conference: “I have no problem with changes. “I want to work in an integrated way. But not at the cost of producing a reduced, watered down service.”

She underlined that health and social care integration should meet the needs of communities not be an excuse for cuts like those seen in school nurse and district nurse services.

Devolution must be respected in Brexit deal

Conference backed Northern Ireland’s call for the devolution settlement to be respected throughout the the Great Repeal Bill process.

It also backed UNISON Scotland’s Stephen Smellie in his call that: “Negotiations around Brexit must not be used to dilute powers devolved to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.”

He also stressed the importance of defending human rights.

However, Katrina Murray’s call on behalf of Lanarkshire Health for the devolved administrations to be able to reach their own positions on access to the single market was a step too far for Conference and it was lost.

UNISON will press for legislative consent from the devolved nations and a commitment from the UK Government not to claw back already devolved powers; and for further devolution of powers including any repatriated from the EU.

Your UNISON National Executive members

Scotland’s UNISON members elected their National Executive Council (NEC) members in a recent postal ballot.

The NEC is the union’s supreme body of lay activists tasked with setting the union’s strategies and taking decisions between national conferences.

The Scotland team is Maggie Cook, Falkirk branch; Jim McFarlane, Dundee City; Davena Rankin, Glasgow Caledonian University; Kate Ramsden, Aberdeen and South Lanarkshire branch and Scottish deputy convenor.

It’s the first time on the NEC for Jim, Kate and Stephen.

They took up their NEC posts after UNISON Conference on 23 June and attended their first proper NEC Meeting in London on 4 July.

This meeting allocated NEC members to committees and also elected the chairs and vice-chairs of these committees.

We were delighted that Davena Rankin was elected as vice-chair of the Policy Development and Campaigning Committee (PDCC) and Maggie Cook was elected as chair of the Services to Members Committee.

The meeting also agreed UNISON’s campaigning priorities over the coming year. Smashing the 1% pay cap is UNISON’s number one priority and the general secretary laid out a wide ranging political and industrial campaign to bring this about.

Our second priority is to save the NHS and the third is our anti-austerity campaign.

All are underpinned by UNISON’s anti-racism work.

The NEC agreed a donation of £10,000 to support those affected by the Grenfell Tower tragedy and there will be liaison with the local branch and other UNISON reps on the ground as to how best to deliver this to make sure it goes directly to those in need.

We will be keeping activists up to date with the work of the NEC and your Scotland NEC members through a regular column in Scotland’s UNISON.

Conference 2017

UNISON’s annual National Delegate Conference is the union’s ruling body. Every year delegates from all over the country take part in debates to vote on our policies and priorities.

Every UNISON Gonzales campaign is supported by a people’s vote on Brexit and a step towards a United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, whatever the causes, threw into focus the reality of the divide in a Tory UK between obscene wealth and inexcusable poverty.

The need to address that was reflected in policies we set on breaking the pay cap, on campaigning for decent public services, on housing policies and on a decent living wage that is actually enough to live on.

Moving the motion, Jane Atchison asked delegates to imagine what it would feel like to be diagnosed with a terminal illness, unimagorable, earth-shattering, “and then the last thing folk need is a knee jerk reaction from their employer to move to dismissal on the basis of incapability.”

Facing the indignity of dismissal whilst managing a terminal illness is quite simply cruel and wrong,” slammed Jane.

She told delegates that South Lanarkshire Council and trade unions signed up to the TUC’s Dying to Work campaign last November and they are also making sure that HR understands what this means and that it is applied.

East Lothian’s John Nisbet gave a moving account of his own situation when, having worked for his employer for 37 years, he was diagnosed with cancer.

“It was like bloody hounds surrounding a fox! After 37 years as an employee I felt they wanted rid of me. Terrible.

John recovered, “thanks to the wonderful NHS staff” but has not forgotten his experience.

Scotland’s Maggie Cook and Susan Kennedy also made contributions in this debate.

Support for members living with mental ill health

Conference commended the Cymru Wales Mental Health Champions scheme and called on other regions to adopt a similar initiative.

Moving the Disabled Members’ motion, Scotland’s Kathleen Kennedy said: “I believe that anyone with mental ill health is able to get the support they need, without fear of judgement or discrimination.”

Susan Kennedy backed the motion saying: “Thousands of members living with mental ill health being supported by branch stewards... Sadly the supporter can very quickly become the sufferer of mental health. And that is why this motion is so important.”

I want to work in an integrated way. But not at the cost of producing a reduced, watered down service’

UNA PROVAN from Lanarkshire Health - won support for action to ensure private sector stewards are fully involved in branches.

Jane Atchison

Dying to Work campaign

South Lanarkshire won ground-breaking support for the Dying to Work campaign as Conference pledged to lobby for backing for a campaign for the rights of workers who are terminally ill.

Moving the motion, Jane Atchison asked delegates to imagine what it would feel like to be diagnosed with a terminal illness, unimagorable, earth-shattering, “and then the last thing folk need is a knee jerk reaction from their employer to move to dismissal on the basis of incapability.”

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L to R: Maggie Cook, Jim McFarlane, Kate Ramsden, Stephen Smellie and Davena Rankin

Conference stories are by Kate Ramsden, John Stevenson, Jane Atchison and Marie Quigley. Much fuller reports and photos are on the website under the news menu.
Building control staff overworked, stressed and stuck in office

**Building control staff are overworked, stressed and stuck in the office, says UNISON.**

That’s the conclusion of UNISON Scotland’s latest survey – Building Stress: a survey of building control staff.

The report, available on the website, is the latest in the union’s Damage series which looks at the impact of austerity cuts on the country’s public services and the people who deliver them. The survey reveals a group of workers who are short-staffed and long overdue a pay rise.

The Building Standards service in Scotland is provided by local authorities. Their role is the processing of building warrants, therefore checking building design and construction. They also ensure that dangerous buildings are made safe.

Key findings from the survey show: Almost half (48%) said there have been budget cuts this year while one in five (20%) said the cuts had been severe. There are 56 fewer staff working in Building Standards now than in 2010. The overworking majority (90%) feel their workload has got heavier.

Nearly 40% work unpaid ‘hours now and again’ while over a third (33%) work unpaid hours most weeks.

Dave Watson, UNISON’s industrial relations officer, said: “This report reveals a dedicated workforce committed to ensuring that buildings meet the standards required but who are under enormous pressure. “They feel exhausted, undervalued and are struggling to deal with the demands placed upon them.”

“People with these qualifications are in demand and there are many opportunities for better paid work in the private sector. There is a real risk that without decent jobs and pay they will take up these opportunities.”

People Power film festival returns to key Scottish cities

**People Power film festival returns to key Scottish cities**

Take One Action, the UK’s leading global change film festival, returns to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness this autumn, bringing some of the most acclaimed films of the year about the big issues of our time, from social inequality and women’s empowerment to workers rights and climate change.

Celebrating the people and the movement that is changing the world, Take One Action will host over fifty screenings across the cities.

The event, which is supported by UNISON Scotland, enables thousands of audience members each year to experience cinema with a difference, to engage actively with campaigners, artists, filmmakers, journalists, politicians and each other - and to take action themselves.

Among the varied titles on offer, many of which will be presented as UK or Scottish premieres, some of the year’s highlights include films such as Workers Cup, which sheds a light on the lives and hopes of construction workers building Qatar’s World Cup infrastructure, the UK premiers of Burning Out, a timely doc highlighting the strain under which health care staff have to operate and To End a War, which offers fascinating insight into the Colombian peace process, as well as Disturbing the Peace, a stirring and hopeful account of ex-PLO fighters joining ex-IDF soldiers to work towards peace in Israel and Palestine.

Every screening at the festival is accompanied by discussions, with audience members encouraged to get involved in the issues raised by the films.

Take One Action executive director, Tamara Van Strijthem, thanked UNISON Scotland for their continued support: “This is a relationship we value immensely. Our focus as a Festival is strongly attached to the campaigns UNISON supports and we look forward to welcoming many UNISON members to our events.”

The festivals will take place 13-24 Sept in Edinburgh and

Glasgow (various venues), 17-19 Nov in Aberdeen (Belmont Filmhouse) and 24-26 Nov in Inverness (Eden Court).

Full programme and booking details available from: takeoneaction.org.uk from 11 August.

Local Government Conference

**UNISON must lead fight against council cuts**

Delegates backed a raft of actions to step up the fight against cuts to local government funding.

Moving Renfrewshire’s call for co-ordinated action and sharing ideas, Brenda Aitchison pointed out that the general election has shown increasing public support and awareness of the value of public services. “Now is the time to build on this momentum”, she said.

Backing the motion, Dundee’s Jim McLarlane said: “The communities our members work in day in and day out have had enough. We deserve better.”

Bring home care back in house now

The conference heard harrowing stories about the state of home care in the UK as it called for councils to sign up to UNISON’s Ethical Care Charter and for Labour to pledge to bring the service back in house.

Labour councils should not wait for a Labour Government before stopping privatisation and putting an end to zero hours contracts.

Aberdeen’s Kate Ramsden told delegates: “If railways can be nationalised surely home care services can be too.”

Aberdeen City’s Deidre Macdonald reported on her authority’s adoption of UNISON’s Ethical Care Charter and added: “We’re watching the new Health and Social Care partnership very carefully to make sure that they don’t seize on any opportunity to privatise.”

In a separate motion from 13 Service Group Executive, Scotland’s Carol Ball restated the union’s commitment to oppose the privatisation of our public services.

“Private companies are not democratically accountable and are driven by shareholders profit at the expense of our members’ pay term and conditions.”

Zero tolerance of bullying and harassment

Building on the work of Scotland Young Members’ award-winning “Gonnae no dae that” campaign, delegates backed a complete zero tolerance on bullying and harassment and actions to eradicate it.

Scotland’s Alison MacCorquodale noted health and safety reps were reporting that bullying was one of the main issues at work.

“This is not acceptable,” she said.

“Remember, we all have a legal right to a safe working environment.”

Organising is more complex than just facility time

While facility time is a major issue in organising in the third sector, it was more complex than just representation, Edinburgh’s John Stevenson told delegates.

Reflecting on previous Edinburgh motions, he called for measures to address the ‘democratic deficit’ preventing these members from playing a full part in their union.

He understood some branch’s concerns but backed the motion to address the ‘democratic deficit’ that had brought Edinburgh additional resources to try to deal with this.